



# A PROPHET OF THE SOUL



F. M. DOSTOEVSKY

*Frontispiece*

# A PROPHET OF THE SOUL: FYODOR DOSTOIEVSKY

By

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Translated from the Russian by

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I did not know where to turn,  
I turned around to all the rest of humanity.

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To  
F. C. N.

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# A PROPHET OF THE SOUL

## CHAPTER I

### DOSTOIEVSKY AND EUROPE

THE full understanding of genius is denied to any single mind or even generation, for it is of the very nature of the immortal genius that every age should approach him from its own particular angle, discovering in him the sublimation of its own essential quality and catching glimpses there of possibilities lying still embryonic within itself. But, of course, this receptivity to the radiance of genius increases with higher culture and broader horizons.

It is more than half a century since the death of Dostoievsky, and if we review the history of the literary criticism relating to him, we see that he has been from time to time subject to very varying interpretations. There is the Dostoievsky of the Classical Russian criticism, the Dostoievsky of the Mystics and the Dostoievsky of the Communists, all somewhat different. And the general Russian conception of Dostoievsky is distinctly different from that held in France or in Germany. To find his spiritual fatherland we have to consider not only the influence of Dostoievsky on Russia, and of Russia on Dostoievsky,

but the reciprocal influence of Dostoievsky and Europe.

Zhukovsky and Karamazin bulked largely in young Dostoievsky's reading. The father Dostoievsky was in the habit of reading Karamazin, his favourite author, to his children in the evenings, and the influence of his lachrymose sentimentalism is appreciable in the earlier work of Dostoievsky. Dostoievsky revered Pushkin as his master and as the greatest of Russian writers. At an early age he knew almost all his poems by heart, and, on Pushkin's death in 1837, sixteen-year-old Dostoievsky went into mourning. His works contain many references to Pushkin, and it was to Pushkin that his last literary production,<sup>1</sup> the final expression of his view of life, was dedicated: "Without Pushkin there could have been none of the later talent."

The other Russian writer who was vitally indispensable to Dostoievsky was Gogol, chief of the contemporary realists, who created the typical Russian and mercilessly condemned the state of things as they were. The "Dead Souls" haunted Dostoievsky all his life, and even in 1876, at the height of his powers, he remarked in his "An Author's Diary", that "the types created by Gogol perplex the mind with the most profound problems, never perhaps to be solved".

Dostoievsky's great rival, Turgenev, was the closest of contemporaries, surviving Dostoievsky by

<sup>1</sup> His speech at the Pushkin celebrations, 1880.

only two years. He was the enigma of Dostoievsky's literary career. They experienced mutual dislike and even hatred, yet, outstanding figures as they were and flung so closely together by time, they could not ignore one another. At first Dostoievsky shared the general admiration for Turgenev. In 1845 he wrote to his brother of the young author back from Paris who had quite won his heart, "aristocratic, handsome, rich, cultured, twenty-five, in fact nature has denied him nothing". But Dostoievsky and Turgenev were incompatibles, and although their similar interests were an incentive to mutual understanding and co-operation, their structures were too different and their values lay in planes too far apart. Dostoievsky was incapable of a lukewarm friendship, and it was not long before he confessed that he could not endure Turgenev's "aristocratical, pharisaical embrace; he seems to be about to kiss but merely deigns a pitying look". At first Dostoievsky strove to maintain an objective attitude when they met in Petersburg or abroad. He published Turgenev's stories in his journal and reviewed his works, except "Smoke", with strict impartiality. A question of money was the occasion for the first open animosity. While abroad Dostoievsky lost a large sum of money through gambling and appealed to Turgenev, as he habitually did to his friends, for assistance. Turgenev complied in a harsh-toned letter and rigorously enforced the return of the loan afterwards. Their fundamental differences of outlook intensified the ill-will thus

aroused. In "Smoke", Turgenev said that the annihilation of Russia would leave no blank in civilization, and Dostoievsky could not pardon Turgenev for that. Nor could he pardon him for his irreligion and submergence in foreign culture. His hatred of Turgenev only increased with age, witness the ruthless mockery in "The Possessed", where Karamazinov is a ludicrous caricature of Turgenev. Karamazinov's love scenes are always set amid rare plants, grass of violet sheen, and orange-hued trees. Turgenev read the book, and recognising himself, merely shrugged his shoulders and said, "There, didn't I tell you the fellow was quite mad?"

And yet—all his life Dostoievsky yearned for the friendship of Turgenev; he thirsted for the recognition of a writer idolised at that time by a wide public, and strove to build a bridge across the torrent of misunderstanding. But this bridge, though many times begun, was never completed.

They cannot even be described as opposite poles, for except time they have no common axis. They were guided by totally different ideals and when their paths happened to cross their mortification was too great to be concealed. Dostoievsky was of the lower middle-class, Turgenev belonged to the aristocracy. Dostoievsky was city-bred, a nervous epileptic, continually in straits for money; Turgenev was a wealthy landowner who wrote and travelled to suit his own pleasure. Turgenev was a refined,

westernised sceptic. Dostoevsky was tragic and earnest, a Russian among Russians.

There is an air of dignity and beauty about Turgenev's works. The general atmosphere in Dostoevsky's is of nervous desperation. The heroes of Turgenev love, fight and die gracefully ; the heroes of Dostoevsky do everything desperately. Turgenev, being more comprehensible, met with a better reception from publishers and public, and this gnawed at Dostoevsky's heart. "Oh could I write but one novel in the same circumstances as Tolstoy or Turgenev." At that time Turgenev, the rich land-owner, was getting 400 roubles per quire, whereas Dostoevsky, whose high-strung nervous system constituted all his resources, got only a quarter of this. In the stress of overwork he remonstrated : "I am well aware that my work is inferior, but not to such an extent. Why, therefore, do I, in all my poverty, receive 100 roubles from the same publishers from whom Turgenev, with his 2000 serfs, gets 400 ? Poverty forces me to write hastily, for money—which means ruining everything." At the attacks of critics Turgenev merely smiled, "It will pass like a summer shower", but Dostoevsky writhed beneath them, in anguish at being misunderstood and at disappointing the hopes of his contemporaries.

Merely to look at them is enough to convince us that Dostoevsky and Turgenev belong to different worlds. Turgenev, as an old man, with his well-groomed beard and features of copy-book regularity,

immaculately dressed and calmly surveying the beauty of things. The marks of time are such as intensify the balanced harmony of his face. And Dostoievsky —his hands nervously clasping his knees, clothes that hang loose about his sunken breast and an ashen face with glowing, inward-searching eyes. Turgenev's novels seem to demand a casing of white leather with gold lettering, but for those of Dostoievsky the binding is a matter of indifference. It is the contrast between the Song of David and the Book of Job.

With Tolstoy, his other great contemporary, Dostoievsky had no personal contact. Tolstoy rarely visited Petersburg in the '70's, when Dostoievsky's fame was established. Both were present once at a lecture by Soloviev, but Dostoievsky was unaware of it, and was chagrined at having missed the opportunity of an introduction. But Tolstoy was not anxious to meet Dostoievsky. Dostoievsky greatly admired Tolstoy's work, and says in "An Author's Diary" that "Tolstoy succeeds better than any of us in expressing himself". He hailed "Anna Karenina" as a masterpiece, and was especially fond of the reconciliation scene between Vronsky and Karenin over the dead Anna. Tolstoy thought that "The House of the Dead" and "The Insulted and Injured" were Dostoievsky's best works, but he was very reserved in his opinions on Dostoievsky, and did not pay much attention to his literary progress. But he was not to remain blind to the greatness of Dostoievsky. "He was very near to me, indispens-

able. . . . I regarded him as my friend. Now my mainstay is torn away and I feel lost and realise what he meant to me." These words, however, came too late, for Tolstoy wrote them after Dostoievsky's death.

Dostoievsky's most intimate friend was the poet Apollon Maikov, a man of learning and culture. He was Dostoievsky's trusted confidant in time of trouble and the receptacle of his inmost thoughts. The first to direct public attention to Dostoievsky was the critic Belinsky who, as early as 1847, had remarked on his exceptional insight into the tragic side of life. He regarded Dostoievsky as the down-and-out's writer and the exponent of social misery. Dostoievsky had comparatively little to do with Nekrasov, Goncharov and Herzen, his other literary contemporaries.

Mikailovsky was responsible for the classical interpretation of Dostoievsky. His essay, "Heartless Talent" (1882), aimed at proving that the basic ingredient in the art of Dostoievsky was heartlessness. Mikailovsky recognises two classes of writers: those with the feelings of the devouring wolf, and those with the feelings of the lamb being devoured; and he asserts that no writer analyses as minutely, powerfully and vividly as Dostoievsky does, the feelings of the wolf preparing to devour and actually devouring the lamb. Mikailovsky represents Dostoievsky as a portrayer of cruelty, ruthlessness and brutality, to applaud whom is to applaud the matador as he fixes his darts in the bull. As a torturer he is unsurpassed:

he tortures himself, tortures his heroes and forces his reader into self-torture. Therefore, according to Mikailovsky, the talent of Dostoievsky must be called heartless. But the onesidedness of this theory is obvious to anyone who does not close his eyes to the flashes of brightness that relieve even the most sombre of Dostoievsky's works.

The Mystics, Vladimir Soloviev, Merezhkovsky, Berdyaiev and Rozanov form a distinct group among Russian critics. Soloviev and Dostoievsky met in 1873. Dostoievsky was fifty-one. Soloviev was twenty and had just finished his philosophical curriculum. Dostoievsky had by that time written all his novels, except "A Raw Youth" and "The Brothers Karamazov". But it was a most devoted friendship. Some critics say that Soloviev was the model for Alyosha, and Dostoievsky himself used to say that Soloviev's features reminded him of Caracci's Christ, which was his favourite. On the death of his son Alexey, Dostoievsky withdrew with Soloviev into a monastery and spent some unforgettable days with him in quiet conversation and meditation. Dostoievsky was a regular attender at Soloviev's lectures on God-man in 1878. It was a unique attachment between the grey haired, celebrated writer and the youthful philosopher, for it was hard to say which was the more indebted to the other. Before the Great War Russians in general saw Dostoievsky through the eyes of Soloviev.

For Soloviev, the greatness of Dostoievsky lay in

his love for the individual man of flesh and blood, in his belief that each was a member of the brotherhood of God, and his faith in the boundless power of the human soul to overcome all external violence and inward despair. He saw Dostoevsky as one to whom the presence of God and Christ was revealed through the power of inner love. The poets of old were prophets and priests: religion was the basis of poetry, and art the handmaid of God. This ancient function of art was fulfilled by Dostoevsky, and therefore Soloviev called him Russia's greatest mystic, humanitarian and realist. He does not linger amid his realistic descriptions of the evils of human society, but eagerly seeks a solution. The aim of his most dreadful scenes is to bring home to men the wrongs in their midst. To the end he remains a critic of life. Yet he knows that society cannot be regenerated by terrorism and the death penalty, but only by moral heroism. Soloviev hailed Dostoevsky as the nineteenth century prophet of Christianity.

The interpretations of the other Mystics are fundamentally similar. Berdyaiev, too, regards Dostoevsky mainly as a protagonist of Christianity, emphasising the originality of his conception of Christ. He describes Dostoevsky as the greatest Russian metaphysicist, the fountainhead of metaphysics in Russia. But though he takes as the motto for his essay, "And the light burneth in darkness", Berdyaiev's Dostoevsky is more sombre than Soloviev's or Merezhkovsky's. He dwells on the negative

side of Dostoievsky's art, on the pitfalls in it that might ruin lives. Soloviev had said that Dostoievsky gives us a way of life, but Berdyaiev holds that Dostoievsky is an unsound guide, since the tragic is only one side of life. He sees in Dostoievsky a thoroughly Russian writer who has diagnosed better than anyone else the weakness of the Russian character, the luxury of inertia, the lack of will; who knows the great potentialities of the Russian nation, but also the inner malady which makes self-restraint difficult.

According to the Mystics, men will continue to read Dostoievsky as long as they strive to follow Christ. Is this in fact the case? Decades have passed. It is posted on the Kremlin gates that religion is for fooling the people. There is no Christmas. And still the most-read author in Soviet Russia is Dostoievsky. The proletarian leaders hold him up as a model to the new generation of writers. In communist Russia a vast amount of intensive research has been done upon Dostoievsky, many fresh data have been brought to light and his letters have been published in two bulky volumes, annotated with painstaking diligence. In his introduction to this edition of the letters, G. Gorbachev gives a remarkable explanation of the Soviet attitude towards Dostoievsky. He anticipates the murmurings of those who, on the appearance of this work, will ask what Soviet Russia, the mortal foe of mysticism and idealism, has to do with Dostoievsky, by showing that it is not Dostoievsky but his obsolete interpreters who are harmful.

For firstly, the modern proletarian critics are of the opinion that Dostoievsky is one of the greatest masters of Russian prose, and that Soviet writers should accordingly be made to study his methods. Secondly, Dostoievsky claims special interest as the first writer who transported the Russian novel into the whirl of urban life. Thirdly, it is salutary to be acquainted with Dostoievsky's ideas, for, though he advocates individualism, this individualism comes to grief in all his novels, just as it breaks down in his metaphysics. Thus the characterization of his heroes is extremely instructive and leaves no doubt that the one escape from this strained individualism is—collectivism. Fourthly, his pitiless revelation of a corrupt bourgeois and aristocratic society is a fierce protest against the capitalistic order. And finally, he has "left us the finest examples of anti-religious propaganda". For these reasons, Gorbachev concludes, a study of Dostoievsky is indispensable not only to writers, but to all who fight on the ideological front.

The present Soviet attitude to the question of form in Dostoievsky's art is revolutionary. The older Russian critics (Vieselovsky, Zhdanov, etc.) often attacked Dostoievsky's carelessness in the matter of form and his chaotic characterization. But this modern, so-called Formalist school, led by Shklovsky and Grosman, vetoes the view that Dostoievsky is interesting solely for his conceptual content, averring, on the basis of thorough scientific investigation into

his style, aesthetics and construction, that Dostoievsky is a master craftsman with words. "Problems of form were always uppermost in his mind. . . . He is great not so much as a philosopher, psychologist or mystic, but rather as the creator of a new novelistic style. He has turned over a new page in the history of the novel in Europe," says Grosman, the most gifted representative of Russian Formalism. He seeks to show that Dostoievsky introduced a new literary genre: the philosophical novel of action, in which he has succeeded in combining a line of philosophical thought with an interesting external plot. The point of departure is always some idea, ethico-psychological or philosophico-religious, and this idea runs through the whole vortex of events. The essence of his technique is the fusion of sensation and philosophy, the combination of religious drama with the gossip of the boulevard.

In leaving Russia, where opinion has been thus diverse, for Western Europe, it is to be noted that, although Dostoievsky is the strongest influence at work on the modern Russian writers (S. Semenov, Lidin, Leonov, etc.) there are no heirs to his spirit among them, but merely imitators of him. The truth of Berdyaiev's saying, that Dostoievsky is the most thoroughly Russian of Russian writers, needs emphasising. Dostoievsky saw very clearly the failings of his nation, and was not afraid to call them by their proper names, but at the same time he never doubted that the Russians were the chosen people who would

one day bring about the rebirth of Europe. Neither a diabolical death sentence nor cruel penal servitude was able to weaken this love. Abroad he felt like a "slice cut from the loaf", but still this did not prevent him from eagerly accepting the spiritual riches of Europe. He made several foreign tours and stayed in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France and England. He says in "*An Author's Diary*" that he could for brief periods sever himself from his native country, suppress his own personal prejudices, and view foreign lands and cultures with impartial goodwill, and appreciate their great qualities. And in "*An Author's Diary*" for 1876 he says: "We Russians have two countries: our Russia and Europe. . . . Universal humanity is the chief distinction and duty of the Russian. The writers of Western Europe are as near to us as they are to the Western Europeans themselves."

Which foreign civilization lay nearest to Dostoevsky's heart? He did not know English, or understand the English intimately, but as a boy he was fascinated by Sir Walter Scott, and Shakespeare's dramas, with their rich play of contrasts, held his interest all his life. He was an old man when he expressed the opinion that Shakespeare would never lose his merit, being the quintessential man and above all epochs and nations. Joseph Conrad spent much time studying Dostoevsky, and learned from him how to steal into the innermost recesses of a man's personality. But he has none of Dostoevsky's love

of mankind, and his attitude to the great Russian is pointedly expressed in his remark that Dostoevsky has a "bad smell".

What interplay of influence has there been between Dostoevsky and Germany? Dostoevsky did not like the German type. In his works the Germans are good natured, but narrow and somewhat ridiculous. But he recognises a distinction between the ordinary Germans and the great and cultured Germans. Of all the world's geniuses, Goethe is probably the furthest removed from Dostoevsky. He did not know the desperation of the caged spirit; the harmony of his art was essentially alien to the dynamic, passionate Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky occasionally mentions Goethe in "An Author's Diary", but he shows no originality in his opinions, speaking, as it were, of a celebrated writer with whom he personally had nothing in common. But he idolised Schiller. In his youth he was entranced by the "noble, burning Don Carlos", and the name of Schiller was a "dearly loved sound that awoke many a yearning". In "The Brothers Karamazov", the work of his maturity, Dostoevsky raises Schiller's Hymn of Joy again and again; and in "An Author's Diary" for 1876 he says: "Schiller has set his mark on the soul of Russia; in the history of our literature his name designates almost a whole epoch." Another congenial German spirit was E.T.A. Hoffmann, with his blend of realism and weird fantasy. The influence of this German Romantic can be felt in Dostoevsky's

works of the first period, especially in "The Double" and "The Insulted and Injured". And in later years Dostoevsky speaks with enthusiasm of Hoffmann's "profound, true beauty united with the living man, besides mellow humour and stark vivid realism". Such is Dostoevsky's debt to German culture. What did he contribute to it?

Germany was, until recent times, always open to spiritual currents from abroad and very early began to appreciate Dostoevsky. The first to discern his greatness was Nietzsche. As early as 1899 he wrote in "Götzen-Dämmerung": "Dostoevsky was the only psychologist from whom I had anything to learn: he belongs to the happiest windfalls of my life." Dostoevsky died in 1881 and Nietzsche's chief works came out in the '80's, so that Dostoevsky can have known nothing of the proclaimer of Superman. But Nietzsche, reverser of values, who called the old gods wooden idols and ruthlessly tore them down, halted piously before Dostoevsky, "this profound man", and even hailed him as his precursor. And, indeed, there are passages in the novels of Dostoevsky that are like motifs for the strains of Zarathustra. Nietzsche's favourite was "The House of the Dead". In "Götzen-Dämmerung" he says: "Dostoevsky found the Siberian convicts among whom he lived for many years—those thoroughly hopeless criminals for whom no road back to society lay open—very different from what he had expected, that is to say, carved from about the best, hardest and most valuable

material that grows on Russian soil." Two forces are at strife in Dostoievsky, i.e. God-man and Man-god, but Nietzsche had eyes only for Promethean Man-god, for the indomitably proud individualists who can say with Zarathustra : " I love all those who are like heavy drops falling one by one of the dark cloud that lowereth over man : they herald the coming of the lightning and succumb as heralds." He ignored the mild, Christ-like characters (Sonya, the Idiot, Alyosha) but in the rebellious, self-willed aristocrats (Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, Kirilov) he found kinsmen to Zarathustra. Almost all the speeches of Zarathustra might be monologues by Raskolnikov, Kirilov or Ivan Karamazov. Nietzsche was right when he said that Dostoievsky was the one psychologist from whom he had learned.

Nietzsche was the first isolated admirer of Dostoievsky in Germany, but after the Great War all Germany welcomed him with ovations. The youth of post-war Germany took Dostoievsky as their guide in place of Goethe or Ibsen. The horrors of war and revolution had cleared the way for an understanding of Dostoievsky, for only those who have sunk to " the darkest depths of suffering " can truly appreciate him.

The Expressionists were particularly attracted to Dostoievsky, sympathising not with the autocratic individualism dear to Nietzsche, but with the gospel of universal humanity and universal brotherhood proclaimed in the novels. They took over from the

cosmos of Dostoievsky the idea thus expressed in "The Insulted and Injured": "The most degraded man is yet always a man and calls himself my brother." This conception is echoed in all the work of the Expressionists. Franz Werfel, the profoundest of them, said that "the light of God shines in the most hideous face", and his great novel, "Barbara oder die Frömmigkeit", where he abandons his blatant chaotic expressionism, is perhaps nearer in spirit to Dostoievsky than any other work. Certain dreadfully naturalistic scenes (the executioner as masseur, and the execution) are drawn with Dostoievsky's sheer, sharp outlines, and Barbara herself, with her almost crazily unselfish and humble love, is closely related to the Idiot and Alyosha.

On a general consideration of the greatest German critics and essayists—Zweig, Luk, Prager—one may say that they regard Dostoievsky as the great extremist writer, ready to wallow in the mire, but able no less to rise to supreme heights. In their eyes, Dostoievsky is the most typical representative of Russian culture.

One of the books that Dostoievsky loved best was Cervantes' "Don Quixote". He said of it that "if after their days on earth are done men are asked somewhere up on high, 'Did you understand your life on earth, and what is your opinion of it?'—then they will be able to present Don Quixote". Don Quixote's energetic idealism fascinated Dostoievsky, his vows to be ever wakeful, to succour those in distress and protect the weak, giving second place

to his own comfort, or rather no place at all. But though "Don Quixote" was a sacred book to him, Dostoievsky was ignorant of Spanish civilization in general, for at that time Europe, even for a man of education, ended at the Pyrenees. It was a woman who introduced Dostoievsky into Spain. In the last years of the nineteenth century, Emilia Pardo Bazán, while staying in Paris read Dostoievsky in French translations, and, falling under his spell, she later became his interpreter to her own country. After her, the most famous writers and philosophers of Spain have paid homage to Dostoievsky. Pio Baroja, the Spaniard who has the deepest understanding of Dostoievsky and who is most akin to him, says in "Juventud Egolatria" (1910): "In a hundred years' time they will speak of the appearance of Dostoievsky in literature as one of the most extraordinary events of the nineteenth century."

Ortega y Gasset in his collection of essays, "La Deshumanizacion del Arte" (1928), says of Dostoievsky, in comparing him with Proust: "he was the poor devil's advocate, yes, if you like, his prophet." It is singular that, like the Russian, Grosman, he praises Dostoievsky as a "wonderful technician in the novel, one of the greatest innovators in the novelistic form". He points out that there is nothing false or conventional in Dostoievsky; the reader is never brought up against narrow theatrical frameworks, but set amid reality, eloquent without rhetoric. Miguel de Unamuno also was an admirer of Dostoievsky.

evsky and in the "Agonia de Cristianismo" he calls "The Brothers Karamazov" the evangel of his youth.

Before the civil war, interest in Dostoievsky was still on the increase, as is proved by the publication of a new edition of his novels. In 1936 R. Cansinos Assens produced a work which consists of a minute examination of Dostoievsky's chief characters (52 in all), and a classification of them on a psycho-analytical basis. A remarkable feature of the book is the special section devoted to Dostoievsky's humour, sarcasm and irony.

Dostoievsky was twice in Italy, but he was too consumed with inner conflict to observe either pictures or architecture. He admired the Madonna of Rafael at Dresden, but all Italy passed unheeded before him. Dostoievsky, however, has not gone unheeded in Italy. There is a large body of works on him, and there are critics who maintain that Grazia Deledda reflects his influence. Besides those of Cuzzer (1935) and of Gobetti (1928), G. Donnini's brilliant monograph deserves mention. Approaching the Russian writer in a spirit of realism, he finds that the so-called Slavonic soul is a fabrication of Western Europe, and that the Russians are neither such mystics nor yet such barbarians as Italians imagine. He sees Dostoievsky's greatness in the testimony of his life. "Dostoievsky always retained faith in life and it was in life that he placed his hopes, but his greatest merit is not mastery of life but his endurance of it in its entirety."

Before Dostoievsky's works became known in Italy, Italians were not aware that a hero could endure every humiliation and yet not long for death. Italians find it astonishing that Dostoievsky's heroes so seldom commit suicide. Donnini thinks that Dostoievsky is the friend of all in whom an active conscience wages its lonely struggle. He smiles upon children and simple-hearted folk, but in the anguish of the sufferer he sees the truest revelation of God. "Would that conscience had had no place in the scheme of things. It is so powerful and so far from the grace of God." In Donnini's analysis Dostoievsky was a man who knew the agony of the war between those greatest of foes—the intellect and the heart.

Dostoievsky was familiar with French civilization. It was from it that he derived most and in it he found minds most kindred to his own. He knew French well even as a boy, and his letters are interspersed with remarks in French. He read Kant in a French translation. During his several long stays in Paris he made a close study of the French people. He admired their feeling for form. "French—i.e. beautiful, finished form." But this polish did not dazzle him. "The national type of Frenchman, or rather, of Parisian, had been moulded into elegant forms while we were still bears. . . . Now even the vulgarest Frenchman has manners, modes of address, expressions and even thoughts, of perfectly elegant form, though his own initiative, his own heart and

soul, has had no part in the creation of that form; it has all come to him through inheritance." ("The Gambler.") The French order of life and state was odious to him, and he often speaks scornfully of the country where Catholicism is combined with atheism and bourgeoisie with socialism, but later in life, after her defeat by Germany, Dostoevsky's attitude towards France became more sympathetic. Among France's great ones, Corneille and, even more, "burning, passionate Racine", won his youthful admiration. He loved George Sand's proclamation of fervid humanity, "her types and ideals virginal and pure in the highest sense". Reading her novels so excited him that he could not sleep. And late in life, in his "An Author's Diary" for 1876, he records his appreciation of this "enlightened prophetess of a happier future". The French Utopians—Fourier, Eugène Sue, Saint-Simon—with their speculations on the happiness of universal humanity, stirred and fired young Dostoevsky, and in part they were the cause of his penal servitude. But his two contemporaries, Victor Hugo and, especially, Balzac, were his life-long inspiration. At the age of twenty he seriously advises his brother to steep himself in the works of Hugo, "a lyrist of Christ-like purity, with the soul of an angel", and eulogises Hugo's "naïve, unshakable, rhapsodic faith in God". "Les Pauvres Gens" of Hugo appeared after Dostoevsky's "Poor People", but the two works have more in common than their titles. There is an undoubted affinity of ideas between

Dostoievsky and Hugo, for both were men of the social type for whom the soul of the living man is the supreme value. They are the two most ardent opponents of the death penalty in the nineteenth century. Dostoievsky also admired Hugo's method of composition; the massing of colours, juxtaposition of contrasts and whirling about of characters. But this affinity is not to be overstressed. Their art is strikingly different. Dostoievsky is far closer to life. His men are, so to speak, naked, whereas the men of Hugo walk stiffly in starched linen.

Dostoievsky had a great admiration for Pascal and found in the thought of this French philosopher and moralist a beacon to his own endeavours: the glorification of Christianity, war against atheism, and faith for the mind in the irrepressible voice of the heart. But it was to Balzac that his debt was greatest. When he was a boy he spent his summer holidays reading all that he could get of Balzac, and his first literary effort was a translation of "Eugénie Grandet". In 1843 Balzac came to Petersburg and stayed for three months. The Russian papers were full of his praises, and Dostoievsky, though he never met him in person, chose Balzac as his spiritual master. When he married Anna Grigorievna, and began to attend systematically to her education, Balzac was the first author to be read. Balzac was, in many ways, Dostoievsky's teacher and his example: in his combination of realism and fantasy, his preoccupation with the mania of passion, his analysis of the criminal

mentality, and his psychology of will-power and humility. The evangelical note in Balzac, too, has its resonance, for the meek, suffering women of Dostoevsky, with their forlorn hopes of happiness, are sisters to "Eugénie Grandet". The direct influence of Balzac is felt when "Crime and Punishment" is compared with *Père Goriot*. Rastignac's problem is the problem of Raskolinkov. Are all men equal or have some greater rights? May we commit crime for a noble end? In their psychology and their attitude to the problem the two characters are very similar. Both are law students without resources, both have sisters languishing in poverty, both, before their crimes, belabour the problem in all its aspects. Every great man takes to himself some teacher, who assists him to discover himself. Balzac was Dostoevsky's teacher: and his teacher in the best sense, i.e. a revealer of his own potentialities. But the art of Dostoevsky and that of Balzac cannot be considered identical as regards their fundamental tones, for their conceptions of life belong to quite different planes. In the centre of Balzac's cosmos rolls the heavy wheel of pessimism, but in Dostoevsky's there burns the clear flame of sanctity. The characters of Dostoevsky are as though illumined from within, but in those of Balzac an unseen hand has forcibly quenched the light.

Dostoevsky owed much to France. What did he offer in return? He was slow in winning the French public, much slower than Pushkin, Gogol and

Turgenev. Balzac and Hugo knew little or nothing of their ardent admirer in Petersburg. At that time France had arrogantly closed her gates against all foreign thought, and only in the late '90's was Dostoievsky translated into French, even then with abridgments and mutilations. André Gide has closely analysed the French attitude to Dostoievsky. In 1908 he wrote that "the spring at which Europe now quenches its thirst is Dostoievsky. He now occupies the place which, in his own day, belonged to Ibsen, Nietzsche and Tolstoy." But, he continues, the Frenchman is repelled by Dostoievsky on first acquaintance, finding him "too Russian, illogical, irrational, irresponsible". Just before the War, however, and especially in the period after it, the French opened their hearts to Dostoievsky, for at that time their complacent aloofness broke down, and a school of writers arose with the avowed aim of implanting in their countrymen the "Russian unrest of soul". Gide believes that not only the French, but all Western Europeans are at first repelled by Dostoievsky's centralisation of all problems in the relationship of man to God, and by his apparently complete neglect of the problems concerning the family, the state and social discord. His excessive humility and self-abnegation are repellent, too. Dostoievsky, indeed, must always seem strange to the proud and self-regarding. Instancing this incomprehensible strangeness, Gide quotes the letter from Siberia in which Dostoievsky, his wrists loaded with chains,

writes that he reveres the Czar, that Czar who had condemned him unjustly. The French find it difficult to accustom themselves to such an attitude. In their view the noble character never forgets an injury, but defends itself and avenges its wounded honour. We may agree with Gide that Dostoevsky brought to Western Europe a new and hitherto unheard of ethic: the ethic of forgiveness; and a new beauty, the beauty of humility.

Dostoevsky, as interpreted by France, exemplifies Gide's thesis: "Saints are never great artists, just as great artists are never saints." The influence of Dostoevsky in the novels of Gide is only superficial. It may be felt in "La Porte Etroite", where the versatile Frenchman glorifies self-sacrifice as the supreme goal and the noblest beauty.

Gide approaches Dostoevsky mainly through the intellect. But Saure's, who was born for a tragic life, and who said that "despair is our most natural state of mind since we are no longer Greeks nor children", has an inner kinship with Dostoevsky. He found in Dostoevsky, as Dostoevsky had found in Balzac, a teacher who helped him to find himself, and his soulful thanks to his master in "Trois Hommes" show how he had understood him. He compares Dostoevsky and Flaubert, the two greatest realists of the nineteenth century. Both pitilessly dissected the human soul and explored its every cranny. But Flaubert, he finds, had lost his appeal for youth, since he denied his heroes even the smallest ray of

brightness, whereas Dostoievsky's profoundly tragic conception of life brings him near to our own times.

Of the Scandinavian peoples, the Norwegians, with their bent for probing the problematic, have best understood Dostoievsky. Hamsun, in "Fabulous Country", his notes on a journey in Russia, says that "no other writer has had such a delicate understanding of the complex nature of man as Dostoievsky. His psychological intuition misses nothing, he has the power of the clairvoyant. We lack a measure to gauge his greatness, so far apart does he stand. His contemporaries tried to define him, but none succeeded, for he was too immeasurably great." Hamsun considers "A Gentle Spirit" the best of Dostoievsky's works. "A little book. But for us very great, bafflingly great."

So much for the reciprocity of influence between Dostoievsky and Europe. As he grew older Dostoievsky retired ever farther from the "atheistic Seine" and turned towards the "sacred Ganges". He wished to visit Constantinople and Jerusalem, to draw inspiration for a great work on the East, but failing strength made this impossible. Asia was dear to him as the mother of religions, the land where God dwelt near as a neighbour, the source of the great ideas of Messiah and God-man.

It is more than half a century since Dostoievsky's death, but his critics and followers continue to grow in numbers. Mimosa-souled apostles of Christ and proud, steely individualists, those who swing with

the world's rhythm and those in whose eyes burns the terrible despair of loneliness, holy men of religion and those who call religion the opiate of the masses, have all claimed Dostoevsky as their master and friend. Why is this so? Dostoevsky is a genius, and only the mirrors of many centuries can reflect all his radiance. Genius is all-embracing, but is itself embraced only gradually by successive generations. Talent belongs to a particular nation and period, but genius to mankind and eternity.

## CHAPTER II

# THE WAY OF GOLGOTHA

### *The Dawn*

THERE is sadness in the dawn. Such is the feeling of every man who has seen the bleak, silent prelude to the sun's rising, of every man who does not go through life as a dreamer, unawakened. And it is this feeling that Michelangelo has so masterfully embodied in his "Morning". A powerful woman with sluggish, ponderous limbs, is already awake, but hesitates to raise her heavy eyelids, loth to admit the harrowing kaleidoscope of life. Her shoulders are broad, yet she shrinks from taking up the day's burden; her half-open lips are all too conscious: along with the day's honey they must draw in its gall. And nowhere is there any escape.

The awakening feeling is of sadness and reluctance. Man is born amid groans of anguish. No joyful acclaim heralds his entry.

. . . . .

The 12th of November, 1821, a grey autumnal day, saw the birth of Fyodor Michaelovich Dostoevsky. Life was in haste to reveal to him suffering, death and poverty: he was born in an alms hospital where

his father occupied, as surgeon, the cramped apartments allotted to that official. The atmosphere of moans and poverty in that hospital continued to slumber in the darkness of his subconscious mind and never left it.

Dostoievsky was of the kind who never forget. Light-hearted, transparent natures can behold or experience gloom, pass on and forget. If we pass lightly by, if we forget easily, then the sunlight easily irradiates us again. Dostoievsky could not pass on; he absorbed everything, and when his soul was loaded to the full its fruit fell of itself.

This wretched hospital was his first childhood impression. The second was when he was eight years old. He had gone with his mother to the cathedral in Holy Week and heard, in the heavy atmosphere of the dim, incense-perfumed building, a young priest reading the Book of Job. As he listened tears stole down his thin, sallow cheeks. Deep into his memory sank Job's cry of despair: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? . . . I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet: yet trouble came. . . . For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. . . ."

He was then eight years old; and when he was more than fifty years of age he wrote to his wife during a stay abroad: "I am reading again the book of Job, and it stirs up in me such an ecstasy of anguish,

such a turmoil of emotion that for long hours I pace my room, well-nigh groaning aloud." And in his last novel he returns again to this same motif: it is in the words of Job that the aged Zosima proclaims his own conception of the universe.

A third deep childhood impression. He was nine years old. It was the end of summer; a dry, clear day, windswept and cool, in the country. (At that time his parents owned a little farm.) The shy, lonely boy, left to his own resources, wandered away from the house and crept into the bushes beyond the deep ditches watching the beetles and gorgeous lizards, searching for a handy stick to poke at tadpoles. On a sudden an auditory hallucination made his heart leap with terror; he seemed to hear someone shout: "A wolf! A wolf!" Screaming with fear he ran into the field where his father's serf, Marey, was ploughing. Breathlessly he clutched the ploughman's arms and shrieked: "A wolf is coming!" The broad, powerful ploughman stopped and looked with surprise at the young master's convulsed, panic-distorted face, then drew him to his breast, caressed his bloodless cheeks, touched with his broad, black nail the boy's quivering lips and comforted him: there was no wolf, nor ever could be. Dostoevsky treasured this memory all his life like a saintly relic. In his convict days the serf Marey assumed an aureole of divinity. Once at Easter the drunken convicts started a wild brawl, shouting filthy songs, and making their knives flash through the air. One of

them was severely injured, and lay huddled in a corner, covered with a greatcoat—possibly he might regain consciousness in the morning. Dostoevsky lay on his prison bed, pretending that he was asleep, praying that the drunken mob would leave him alone. His heart was black with hatred and loathing for these people who seemed so bestial and crude. But then suddenly the memory of the ploughman Marey burst upon his mind; vividly he saw Marey's smile, his great thick finger, and the broad, black nail, heard his soothing voice as he caressed the fearstricken child of his master as though it were his own.

These memories soothed the poor convict. His hatred left him. Easter peace descended upon his soul. Who knows, perhaps in those ruffians' hearts too lay hidden something of the ploughman Marey?

Later, when he was fifty-five years old, he reverted again to Marey in "An Author's Diary", portraying this homely figure in words that enoble it.

And a fourth indelible impression, this time at the age of fifteen. He and his brother were journeying by coach from Moscow to Petersburg. Youthful idealists both, they declaimed Pushkin all the way, rapt up in poetry and in the glorious future. There was a halt at one place to rest the horses. And through the window young Dostoevsky beheld this incident. A courier's troika drove up to the coach-station. Down stepped a burly military officer in resplendent uniform and magnificent plumed helmet.

He strode to the bar for a glass of beer, climbed the vehicle again and without uttering a word, fell to beating the driver's neck with his fist. It was not plain anger, it was a calculated procedure tested and practised over long years. "The dreadful fist rose in the air and crashed again and again on the driver's neck. . . . And the driver, crouching from the blows, flailed the horses like a madman, and they plunged forward down the highroad as if they were on fire."

This incident is described by Dostoievsky in "An Author's Diary" after a lapse of forty years, with such vividness that it might have happened only some hours or days before.

The officer's fist and ploughman Marey's caress, man's brutality and man's tenderness—this knowledge he cherished all his life.

### *Family*

The childhood of the impressionable, nervous little Fyodor was spent in that narrow, three-roomed dwelling. Later the father bought out of his miserly savings a small estate near Moscow, and the family used to move there every summer. Wherever Dostoievsky presents the psychology of children in his novels it is the reflection of his own gloomy, fearstricken childhood. His father was an irritable, morose drink-addict, who knew how to punish, but not to caress. Pedantically methodical in his own life he never forgave his children the slightest fault. His

salary was very modest, the family was large—seven children in all—and they were oppressed by the father's stinginess, which frequently verged on absolute miserliness. Dostoevsky Senior was a great believer in education. He engaged a female tutor for French, and himself taught the children Latin—and he was so severe that during the lesson the children were not allowed to sit down or even lean against the table. The tone of the letters Fyodor Michaelovich wrote to his father from the School of Engineering in Petersburg is that of a lackey to his master. Uncertainly and timidly he begs his father for each farthing. “My dear good father, how can you think that when I ask you for money, I ask for something superfluous. Here in the camp I am freezing with cold, drenched through by the rain; without hot tea, one can fall ill; this happened to me last year. Yet I understand your straitened circumstances and in future I'll give up drinking tea.” Further on he asks for money for the barest necessities; for a book, for boots, for pens and paper. And then follows a minute account of all the kopecks he has spent and will have to spend.

The father was a tyrant to his wife, to his children, and to his serfs. The story goes that in the year 1839 his serfs, driven to the last extremity by his cruelty, killed him. Whether this was really the case we do not know. Perhaps it is a mere legend, but in any case it is a significant one.

But the tenderness of the mother compensated for

the father's severity. Maria Fyodorovna was a simple, quiet sufferer. One of those of whom Dostoievsky said later: "There are women with whom men do not often fall in love, but to whom the heart goes out in pity. Whoever once inhales the quiet fragrance of such a soul will cling to it all his life." Dostoievsky adored his mother and cherished like a relic a little picture of an angel she left him. It bore the words: "J'ai le coeur tout plein d'amour." Dostoievsky's mother was his first teacher; she took the children to church and joined with them in evening prayers. She was forever worrying over her little house-keeping concerns; over her children's health, and their moral welfare. She died of consumption like many of Dostoievsky's characters, when Fyodor was sixteen years old, and his younger sister, the seventh child, only two. After the death of Dostoievsky's mother the family broke up and each went off on his own. Of all Dostoievsky's female characters, the mother of Alyosha Karamazov reminds us most vividly of his own mother.

The churlishness and meanness of the father kept the children from the society of others, so little Fyodor, with no friends, fed his hungry fantasy on books. He read voraciously in the classics, French literature and Pushkin's works; the latter he knew almost by heart. But it is interesting to note that the great psychologist and psycho-pathologist, whom modern 'individual' psychologists regard as the founder of their school, never read any scientific books

on psychology. And in fact it is frequently the case that what the mind of the scientist is bringing painfully to birth has been long ago discovered and formulated by the intuition of creative genius.

When Dostoievsky reached the age of seventeen, his father sent him to the School of Engineering in Petersburg. The young man, not daring to oppose his father's wishes, studied more or less methodically, but, soon after finishing the course he cast aside all his professional knowledge and gave himself up entirely to literature. His brother Michail, one year his senior, now became his bosom friend. Michail wrote sentimental verses, translated, dreamt of literary fame and, in course of time, became a distinguished editor. Fyodor was incapable of lukewarm feelings. He could not love half-heartedly or show only a qualified affection. When his heart chose, it was to choose for life. A man with such a heart knows life's sweetest joys but also its bitterest sorrows. For we may lose all we possess. He to whom we have given our whole affection may leave us at any moment—at the call of life, or of death.

Dostoievsky loved his brother, above any of his relations, with lover-like abandon. He wrote him infinitely long, infinitely passionate letters, begging for love and professing his own devotion. And he would wait for the reply in a delirium of impatience. When at last it came he deliberately prolonged the pleasure. He did not read the letter at once, but carried it about, pondering all the possible answers,

weighed it in his hand, tried to guess its contents and length, stuffed it again into his pocket only to take it out again, so prolonging the joy for a quarter of an hour and even longer. Then suddenly breaking the seal and tearing open the envelope he greedily drank in every line, every word, even those which are not expressed, which in every letter of love are written between the lines in unseen characters. He read Pushkin with his brother, made plans for the future, later jointly edited a journal. Yet when Dostoievsky was a convict and in exile, he was in despair because his brother seemed to have forgotten him. Seldom did he receive any money, and letters came still more seldom. Was his brother afraid lest the government should suspect him of political intrigue through his correspondence with Dostoievsky? Or was he so beset with little everyday cares that he had no time left for his brother? Or was it impossible under the strict régime of the time to do anything more, and was he, Dostoievsky—as so often—asking the impossible? We cannot answer these questions; we only know that Dostoievsky's letters written during his exile are full of expressions of despair and complaints at his brother's indifference.

### *The Morning of Creation*

On a memorable day in 1845 Dostoievsky finished his first great creation—the novel “Poor People”. The chief character, Devushkin, is a poor, insignificant

clerk. He has not the spirit to hold his back erect. He spends all his days copying government documents. His colleagues nickname him "The Rat", and it seems that in the world's rhythm, too, he has been allotted no bigger part. But love awakens his consciousness of manhood and in one of his letters (the novel is written in epistolary form) he writes: "I know how much I owe to you, my darling. . . . Before I knew you, my angel, I was solitary and as it were asleep and scarcely alive. They said . . . that even my appearance was unseemly and they were disgusted with me, and so I began to be disgusted with myself; they said I was stupid. When you came to me, you lighted up my dark life, so that my heart and my soul were filled with light and I gained peace at heart, and knew that I was no worse than others; that the only thing is that I am not brilliant in any way, that I have no polish or style about me, but I am still a man, in heart and mind a man." These words are the key to Dostoevsky's first, yet powerfully written, novel, and a clue to the line of all his future creation.

When Dostoevsky had finished his manuscript he took it to the poet Nekrasov, and handed it to him without a word. But he could not go back to his house, so agitated was he. He went to one of his friends, talked with him till late into the night and read with him the "Dead Souls" of Gogol, as he had done many a time before. In the clear spring night he at last returned to his house—it seemed

empty, as if someone had departed, died. Then at 4 a.m. the bell rang. In rushed Nekrasov with a friend, and with tears in his eyes embraced the astounded Dostoievsky. Nekrasov poured out his story, how with his friend he had begun reading the manuscript the night before, had at one sitting devoured the whole and, having reached the last sentence, had decided to go at once to the author to congratulate him. "Never mind his sleep: we'll waken him. This is worth more than sleep."

The following morning Nekrasov hastened to the great critic of that epoch, Belinsky, and told him that a new Gogol had arisen. Belinsky frowned, with critical severity, "You think that Gogols grow like mushrooms". But he took the manuscript, and, after reading some of it, sent for the author: "Do you fully understand yourself what you have written? The truth is revealed to your eyes and the artist in you is inspired. Be faithful to your talent and you will be a great writer."

The opinion of Belinsky, the spokesman of the realistic, rationalistic movement, was, at that time, accepted blindly, and on his commendation Dostoevsky became suddenly famous. He kept himself informed of every criticism, and wrote in a letter to his brother: "My glory seems to have reached its apex. According to my reckoning, in the course of these two months thirty-five criticisms on me have appeared in various papers. Some praise me to the skies; others are reserved; there are others who

censure me quite openly." A little farther on he adds: "I have a dreadful vice; boundless vanity and ambition." Later Belinsky changed his opinion and became very severe towards Dostoievsky. He dropped his gall without mercy into the sensitive heart of the writer. The great critic did not know that negative criticism has never destroyed a true work of art; only prematurely crushed its creator. Dostoievsky often recalled that first conversation with Belinsky. Ten years before his death he wrote: "It was the greatest moment of my life. As a convict, to recall that meeting gave me strength and lifted up my heart." After a year his friendly relations with Belinsky came to an end. We do not know exactly why they fell out. The fact that Belinsky was the most conspicuous representative of the Westerners' group may have been one reason. In the first part of the nineteenth century there were two clear trends in the spiritual life of Russia: the "Slavophil" and the "Westernising". The Slavophil movement came into being as a reaction against French influence and cosmopolitanism. The Slavophils aimed at founding a purely national civilization in Russia, preaching that Russians must mould themselves not upon foreign nations, but upon their own past. They dreamt of Panslavism—a union of all Slavonic nations under the sceptre of Russia. The fountain-head of all knowledge was for them Orthodoxy. The Westerners, on the contrary, condemned this very full-blooded nationalism, and took over their

spiritual ideals from Western Europe. The government supported the Slavophils and often persecuted the Westerners, afraid that, along with the European culture, they might import constitutional and revolutionary ideas dangerous to Russian absolutism.

For a short time Dostoievsky was a member of Belinsky's literary coterie ; Belinsky's intrepidity and pitilessly keen logic fascinated him. But when his views took a more definite shape the atheistic socialism of Belinsky estranged him more and more. In one of his letters Dostoievsky writes : " This man dared to blame Christ." The fundamental reason for their enmity was no doubt the conflict between their conceptions of life.

### *Arrest, Sentence of Death and Siberia*

Then came the fateful year 1849 with arrest, sentence of death, hard labour and exile. The 'forties were a period of ferment in Russia. The leaders of the intelligentsia were endeavouring, in those days, to reconcile idealistic philosophy with socialistic theory. They discussed the position and the rights of the different classes of society. The Russian serfs had not yet been freed, and opinion was ripe for the abolition of slavery. Serfdom was universally condemned both from the humane and the economic point of view.

In Petersburg Dostoievsky was enrolled in the philosophical and political circle of Petrashevsky, a

clerk in the foreign office. Every Friday a meeting of youths, inspired by French utopian socialism, was held in his private rooms. They drank tea, discussed Fourier's democratic mysticism and the Christian theories of Saint Simon, and protested against the oppression of the censorship. Each infected the others with his own enthusiasm, and they dreamed of a golden age and of universal harmony to be realised on this earth.

The chief aim of Petrashevsky's circle was to arouse society to a hatred of serfdom. Looking back on the political sentiments of this circle in the perspective of history, we cannot help wondering at their moderation—they defended monarchy and no question of a constitution was ever broached. To-day it seems to us quite incomprehensible that the best representatives of that epoch had to pay so dearly for such humane aspirations. Perhaps it must remain an irrevocable law of history: that before any idea is made living it must crucify its creator. That idea alone lives and gives life which absorbs its entire creator, not his mind only, but even his flesh and blood.

Petrashevsky himself, positivist and cosmopolitan as he was, inspired no affection in Dostoievsky, who nevertheless gladly availed himself of his fine library. There he made the acquaintance of that magnificent egoist, Max Stirner, as well as the French Utopian socialists.

Dostoievsky, then in his twenty-eighth year, was

attracted by Fourier's and Saint Simon's faith in the possibility of transforming life and preparing our earth for a happier future by means of philosophy. He was delighted by Fourier's ethical system which discards all the representatives of civilization from Socrates to Rousseau, and leaves Christ as sole leader. In the circle itself his activity was chiefly literary. He interpreted the criticisms of Belinsky, declaimed Pushkin, tried to prove that Pushkin was greater than Victor Hugo, and read his yet unpublished "Nyetochka Nyezvanov". Purely political questions interested him less. Often he spoke with indignation on the oppression of the landowners and zealously pleaded for the abolition of serfdom, but with a deep conviction that all great reforms must come from the Czar. Once only, when someone at a meeting objected: "But if the Czar refuses to free the serfs?" Dostoevsky cried passionately: "Then we will overcome his resistance."

On the night of the 22nd April, 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested as one of Petrashevsky's "revolutionary" circle, and accused of "disseminating letters of Belinsky, containing shameless charges against the Orthodox religion and the government".

A search was made, and books by Eugène Sue and Prudhon, which were banned at that time, were discovered in his room. During the inquiry Dostoevsky was kept in strict confinement. Reading was forbidden. He complained that "he had only his own reflections to live on". He begged his brother

to send him a Bible, and that alone proves that the influence of the socialistic, atheistic doctrines on him was only skin-deep. Imprisonment undermined his health, which was already poor. He confessed in the letter to his brother : " The breakdown of my nervous system proceeds crescendo. My throat is sometimes all swollen, I have little appetite, sleep—fitful and haunted by nightmares." Yet a few lines farther on he adds : " If only I were in health ; sadness is transitory and good spirits depend on nobody but ourselves. Man possesses vast reserves of endurance and vitality, and how strong is his grasp on life I myself have only now truly experienced." In another place he writes : " I expected even worse, but now I know that I possess so much vitality that nothing can exhaust it." Still in prison, he reproaches his brother for his apathy : " zealous work ' con amore ', that is the true happiness."

After Dostoievsky had spent more than six months in prison, sentence of death was passed on him. On the 22nd of December, 1849, he was taken to the Semyonovsky Square. The death verdict was read out to him, but, at the last moment, he was reprieved by the Czar. The sentence of death had been a cruel masquerade arranged by Nicolas I as a lesson to the young " revolutionaries ". Some hours later on that same day, when he mentally suffered the penalty of death, he wrote to his brother to whom he always turned in the crucial moments of his life :

"Brother, dear Comrade! It is all over! I am sentenced to four years hard labour in a fortress (probably Orenburg) and after that—the army. To-day, the 22nd of December, we were taken to the Semyonovsky Square. There the death verdict was read to us. We were allowed to kiss the cross. They broke brands over our heads and dressed us in the death garb (the white shirt). Thereupon we were bound in threes to stakes, to suffer execution. Being the third in the row, I concluded that I had only a few minutes of life before me. I thought of you, Brother, and your dear ones, you, none but you, were in my mind in that last moment. And only then I realised how much I loved you, my dear brother. . . . I contrived to kiss Plestcheiev and Dourov who were next to me—and bid them farewell. Suddenly the drum began to beat. Those who were tied to the pillar were led back to us and we were told that the Czar had spared our lives. Then the real sentence was read. They told us we were to set out that day or the next. I begged permission to see you, but I was told it was impossible. They only allowed me to write this letter. Please answer it immediately. As we were led to the Semyonovsky Square, I saw the great throng of people through the carriage window and thought that perhaps the news of my doom had reached you and you were suffering because of me. Now you will feel relieved in thinking of me. Brother! I am not gloomy, not depressed. Life is life everywhere. Life is within not outside us. I shall have men around me, and to be a man among real men, never downcast or disconsolate, whatever our adversity—that is life, that is the business of life. Now I understand it. This idea has penetrated my flesh and blood. Yes, indeed, the head that created and lived a lofty artistic life, that knew the claims of a lofty spirit and was accustomed to them, that head has been cut from my shoulders. . . . But the same heart is left me, the same flesh and the same blood,

capable of love, suffering pity, and there is still life. On  
voit le soleil!

And now good-bye, Brother! Do not worry about me! A long journey is before me now. I need money. Dear Brother, as soon as you get this letter, try to get some money and send it to me at once. Now I need money more than air. Write me a few lines about yourself . . . I kiss your wife and the children. Do not let them forget me. Perhaps we shall meet again one day? Brother, take care of yourself and your family. Lead a quiet, balanced life. Think of your children's future. . . . Never have I felt within me such a glowing, fiery reserve of rich and healthy spiritual life, as now. But whether my body will stand it all I do not know; I have jaundice. Perhaps everything will solve itself. Brother, I have suffered so much in life—nothing can frighten me any more, come what may."

Then follow affectionate words of farewell to friends, to relatives, and repeated professions of love for his brother, and at last the aching question: "Maybe we shall embrace each other one day and recall our early, bygone, golden days, our youth and our dreams which I now tear from my heart with its blood, to bury them."

It is significant that the ban on writing is the thing that appals him most in Siberia. Contemplating this restriction he exclaims: "If I cannot write, I shall rot away. I would rather have 15 years imprisonment, but with a pen in my hand."

At the end of this long letter he adds:

"If I have aroused ill-feeling in any man or left a bad impression on him, tell him, should you meet him, to

forget it. There is no bitterness nor indignation in my heart, only a craving for the love and embrace of some one of my old friends. The exultation which I felt to-day while taking leave of my friends at the point of death, will never leave me.

“ Looking back on the past, I confess to having wasted much of my time. How many errors and blunders, how much wandering in the dark, and bungling of life! How aimlessly I have squandered my time! How often I sinned against my heart and soul. To think of it makes my heart bleed. Life, that gift, that joy, every moment might have been an eternity of bliss. *Si jeunesse savait!* Now changing my life, I shall regenerate myself anew. Brother! I swear to you I will never lose hope, I will keep my heart and soul pure. I shall regenerate myself, I shall grow better. See, that is my only hope, my only comfort! . . . Want cannot harm me any more. Do not worry. Material ruin cannot annihilate me. Ah, if only I have health!

“ And now farewell, brother, farewell! Remember me without sadness of heart. . . . I must tear myself away from all that was dear to me. How painful it is to leave it all! How painful it is to break oneself in two, to tear one's heart to pieces——!”

This letter is written with a broken heart, yet a great exaltation pervades it. An almost incredible vitality bursts forth from almost every sentence. There is no trace of weariness, apathy or bitterness. The wings of Dostoievsky's soul seem to have grown still more powerful, able to exalt his thoughts still higher. After six months in prison, after sentence of death, his heart was filled with love, his soul with freshness and his brain with new thoughts. There is nothing except perhaps Beethoven's ninth symphony

—wherein he sings triumphant defiance of fate when deafness had already struck him—that we can compare to this letter of Dostoievsky.

Dostoievsky was a man who could not forget. Several times he tried to shape into words the complex feelings of a man sentenced to death, and several times the description of that baleful, glittering winter morning when life was concentrated into one last moment appears in his works. In "The Idiot", written twenty years after the fateful morning, he gives the same minute details, even employs the same words as he had used in the letter to his brother—all remained in his memory as if branded there. Prince Myshkin tells the story of an execution to the General's footman. A little later he speaks on the same theme, in exactly the same tone to the General's wife and her daughters, never noticing that they are sneering at him, not comprehending that they are too self-centred to follow his thought. He does not see that the General's wife is bored. She makes him understand that it is not proper to talk to strangers on a subject like that. But he has to speak, for the recollection blazes up suddenly, swallowing up all the things of the present. He tells the footman that in France he once saw an execution carried out: "The criminal was an intelligent, middle-aged man, strong and courageous. . . . But I assure you, though you may not believe me, when he mounted the scaffold he was weeping and was as white as paper. . . . What must be passing in the soul at such a moment;

to what anguish it must be brought! It's an outrage on the soul, that's what it is! It is written 'Thou shalt not kill,' so because he has killed, are we to kill him? No, that's impossible. It's a month since I saw that, but I seem to see it before my eyes still. I've dreamt of it half a dozen times. . . . Think! if there were torture, for instance, there would be suffering and wounds, bodily agony, and so all that would distract the mind from spiritual suffering, so that one would only be tortured by wounds till one died. But the chief and worse pain may not be in the bodily suffering but in one's knowing for certain that in an hour, and then in ten minutes, and then in half a minute, and then now, at the very moment, the soul will leave the body and that one will cease to be a man and that that's bound to happen; the worst part of it is that it's *certain*. When you lay your head down under the knife and hear the knife slide over your head, that quarter of a second is the most terrible of all. . . . Murder by legal sentence is immeasurably more terrible than murder by brigands. Anyone murdered by brigands, whose throat is cut at night in a wood, or something of that sort, must surely hope to escape till the very last minute. . . . But in the other case all that last hope, which makes dying ten times as easy, is taken away *for certain*. There is the sentence, and the whole awful torture lies in the fact that there is certainly no escape, and there is no torture in the world more terrible. . . . Who can tell whether human nature is able to bear this without

madness? Why this hideous, useless, unnecessary outrage? Perhaps there is some man who has been sentenced to death, been exposed to this torture and then has been told 'you can go, you are pardoned'. Perhaps such a man could tell us. It was of this torture and of this agony that Christ spoke too. No, you can't treat a man like that!"

But this is what had been enacted against Dostoevsky and it is he who, with Christ, bears witness to this anguish before humanity.

Through the mouth of Prince Myshkin he tells the General's family about a man whom he had met the year before and on whom sentence of death had been passed for a political crime. He was led to the post, bound to it, the death-dress (a long white gown) was put on, and a white cap was pulled over his eyes. But twenty minutes later, when he had already mounted the scaffold, word came that he was reprieved, and the sentence of death was commuted to another lighter penalty. Yet he had lived through twenty minutes in the firm conviction that in a few minutes he must inevitably die. "The priest went to each in turn with a cross. He had only five minutes more to live. He told me that those five minutes seemed to him an infinite time, a vast wealth; he felt that he had so many lives left in those five minutes there there was no need yet to think of the last moment, so much so that he divided his time up. He set aside time to take leave of his comrades, two minutes for that; then he kept another two minutes

to think for the last time ; and then a minute to look about him for the last time. . . . Then came the two minutes that he had set apart for *thinking* to himself. . . . He wanted to realise as quickly and clearly as possible how it could be that now he existed and was living and in three minutes he would be *something*—some one or something. But what ? Where ? He meant to decide all that in those two minutes ! Not far off there was a church, and the gilt roof was glittering in the bright sunshine. He remembered that he stared very persistently at that roof and the light flashing from it ; he could not tear himself away from the light. It seemed to him that those rays were his new nature and that in three minutes he would somehow melt into them. . . . The uncertainty and feeling of aversion for that new thing which would be and was just coming was awful. But he said that nothing was so dreadful at that time as the continual thought ‘ What if I were not to die ! What if I could go back to life—what eternity ! And it would all be mine ! I would turn every minute into an age ; I would lose nothing, I would count every minute as it passed, I would not waste one ! ’ ’

Before being sent to Siberia, Dostoevsky was allowed a brief half-hour to take leave of his brother. Witnesses of this scene say that Dostoevsky was much calmer than his brother, Michail. During the four years in Siberia he was permitted to write only short, strictly censored letters. On the 2nd of March,

1854, he was set free, and on the 7th of the same month he wrote to his brother:

"Now I am entirely cut off from you, like a slice of bread from the loaf—I should like to join on again, but I cannot. . . . Do you remember, my dear, my only brother, how we parted? As soon as you left me I was put in chains. At exactly twelve o'clock on Christmas day I was put into prisoner's chains for the first time. They weighed about 10 pounds and were terribly cumbersome. Then we were seated in open sledges—each one by himself with a guard, and in four sledges, with a military escort, we left Petersburg. My heart was sad and I was confused by the turmoil of indefinable feelings within me. My heart ached in mute sorrow. But presently the cold wind refreshed me and I found new courage and vigour, as usually happens when one is about to begin a new life. In the depths of my being I felt at peace, and gave my closest attention to Petersburg. As we passed by the festively illuminated houses, I bade farewell to each individually. We had to pass by your lodging. Krayevsky's house was all ablaze with lights. You told me that there would be a Christmas tree and the children with Emilya Fedorovna would be there. And Oh, bitter was my grief near that house. . . . We were shivering with cold in spite of our thick furs, and to sit in the sledge for ten hours was almost beyond bearing. I was frozen to the very marrow and could not get warm even in the heated rooms. . . . In Perm one night we had to endure a temperature of 40 centigrade under zero—an experience I certainly shouldn't recommend to you. It is rather unpleasant.

"The crossing of the Ural mountains was a sorry affair. The horses and the sledges stuck in the deep snow. A blizzard was raging. We had to get out of the sledges (it was night) and wait until they were got clear. All

around there was nothing but snow and blizzard. We were on the frontier of Europe. Before us Siberia and our uncertain fate, behind us all our past—I became sad, I wept. . . . At last we reached Omsk. In Tobolsk I first heard about my future superiors. The commander-in-chief was said to be a humane man, but the major, Krivzov, a scoundrel such as is rarely to be met with, boor, tyrant, inebriate, every vice rolled into one. He began by calling us both—Dourov and myself—fools on account of our activities and promised to inflict corporal punishment on us at the first opportunity. For two years he had been major and perpetrated dreadful injustices. Two years later he was court-martialled. God saved me from him. He used to come to prison drunk (I never once saw him in his sober senses) and raise an uproar over every petty trifle; because a prisoner lay on his right side, because another talked in his sleep, in a word every single thing that occurred to his besotted brain. God, with this creature we had perforce to live at peace, and this creature wrote the reports on our conduct that were sent to Petersburg.”

In the same letter to his brother Dostoevsky speaks without particular bitterness about hunger and its natural consequences :

“ My digestion is utterly ruined. I have been sick repeatedly. To avoid smoking is impossible, for otherwise one might choke in this fetid atmosphere. Of course, it is done by stealth. My nervous debility has brought on epilepsy, but the fits are rare. I have rheumatism in my feet.”

Yet one line farther on he adds with his customary inexhaustible vitality : “ But otherwise, I feel quite well.” This remark makes the reader draw up in





DOSTOIEVSKY IN EXILE

surprise. Ruined digestion, epilepsy, rheumatism, and nevertheless—feeling well!

From this letter, too, we learn that the only bright moment in these days of gloomy depression was when the jailor, with gun in hand, led the prisoners to chapel. An educated person had no privileges whatever: the same food, the same toil and the same fetters that bore far heavier upon a sensitive intellectual than on a Caucasian brigand. His Bible, the only book he was permitted to have, was stolen from him. Four whole years he spent in prison without break, and the jailors took him outside the walls only for the hours of labour.

"The work is heavy and often we have to toil to the limit of our strength, in mud, thunderstorms, pouring rain or in biting winter cold. . . . We live herded all together in the one barracks. Imagine an old, foul, wooden shed that ought to have been torn down years ago—which is no longer fit for any purpose. In summer the air is insufferably close; in winter—unbearably cold. The floors are all rotten. They are covered with a layer of filth an inch deep; the foot slips on it and it is easy to fall. The small windows are quite opaque, so that it is almost impossible to read by daylight. There is a thick layer of ice on the panes. Water drips from the ceiling which is full of holes. We are pressed together like herrings in a barrel. With the six logs assigned for our fire, warmth is impossible; the ice in the room scarcely begins to thaw and the place is full of charcoal fumes. That is our plight all winter. The prisoners wash their clothes in the same barracks, and splash water all over the room. You don't know where to put yourself. Nobody is allowed to leave the barracks from twilight till dawn, not even if one needs

to, for all the barracks doors are locked. They put a pail in the corridor and it stinks horribly. All the prisoners stink like pigs and they say that it is impossible to avoid swinishness for they are still living men. We sleep on bare boards, only a pillow is allowed us. We cover ourselves with our short overcoats, which do not reach our feet. We lie shivering with cold all night. Everything is infested with fleas, lice and beetles."

Of his own inner state Dostoievsky writes :

" The continual concentration upon self in which I take refuge from the bitter reality, has borne its fruit. I have now many aims and hopes which I had never thought of before."

What were Dostoievsky's relations with the other prisoners ? In a letter to his brother we read :

" I first made the acquaintance of the prison folk in Tobolsk—but here in Omsk I have spent four years among them. They are coarse, grumbling, hot-tempered folk. Their hatred of our respectability passes all bounds ; they receive us, the intelligentsia, with hostility and take malignant joy in our misfortune. If they had got the chance they would have eaten us up. Of course, we dared not defend ourselves, for we had to spend four years in their company, to live, eat, drink, sleep with them, and there was no one to whom we could complain of the countless injustices."

But a little later, looking back again on the four years he had spent in prison and thinking of all the people he had seen there, Dostoievsky confesses :

"In the end man is man everywhere. In Siberia amongst murderers I have learnt to know men. I know not whether you will believe me, but there were deep, strong and noble characters there—it was a joy to discover gold under the coarse crust. And so it was not in one case only, nor two, but in the majority. One could not help respecting some of them—others were truly noble."

We find the same judgement in "The House of the Dead".

"How much youth lay uselessly buried within those walls, what mighty powers were wasted here in vain! After all, one must tell the whole truth: those were exceptional men. Perhaps they were the most gifted, the strongest of our people. But their mighty energies were vainly wasted. . . . And who was to blame? That's just it, who was to blame?"

"The House of the Dead" has an autobiographical tone. In these memoirs Dostoievsky describes the darkest years of his life. There is no book more sombre. Perhaps there are a few books where equally cruel scenes are described, but here we are struck dumb at the thought that the greatest Russian writer has personally gone through all this. Here are no offspring of morbid imagination, no maelstroms of sadistic fantasy, but a great sufferer's Way of Golgotha. Dostoievsky writes in such a way that not for a moment do we doubt that he has suffered himself in this man-made hell; nay, to read him is to feel ourselves there too. All the brutality of human nature is revealed in the dreadful scenes which

describe corporal punishment. Dostoievsky tells us of one, Kalmyk Alexander, sentenced to run the gauntlet between four thousand soldiers for the murder of his superior. When he faints during the ordeal, he is carried to the hospital, where he recovers his senses, and then the torture goes on. Kalmyk Alexander confesses with a quiet simplicity: "I could bear it because I was accustomed to it. I have been beaten ever since I can remember. They used to beat me for everything and with anything that happened to be handy, several times daily. Only those who did not feel like it did not beat me." There was the lieutenant, Zherebiatnikov, who enjoyed every execution immensely. Each time he devised new methods of torture, and, if they proved successful, the moans of the victim were interspersed with the diabolic laughter of the officer.

In the letter to his brother Dostoievsky calls the prisoners a coarse, grumbling, hot-tempered people. In "The House of the Dead" he supports this statement with illustrations of the different types. There is the monster Orlov, who butchered little children and old men in cold blood. A man of extraordinary strength of will, and conscious of his strength. "One could see that he possessed boundless self-control, laughed at tortures and punishment and feared nothing in the whole world. . . . I was surprised at his extreme haughtiness. When he realised that I was trying to awaken his conscience, to arouse in him a feeling of remorse, he gave me a look full of

contemptuous arrogance, as though I were a stupid little boy with whom serious conversation was impossible". There is the bloodthirsty sadist, the Tatar Gazin, whose delight was to murder little children, first terrifying them and so prolonging the "dove's fluttering". There is the headsman, who boasts of his power to kill a man with one blow of a cudgel, a headsman who made an art of his profession. These people knew no remorse and had no inclination to reform, and in truth these sordid surroundings could not be expected to inspire any such ambition. In the first part of his "Memoirs" Dostoevsky writes: "Try to reproach a criminal for his crimes and there will be no end to his cursing. . . . They swore with the skill of artistry—they had a whole science of swearing. . . . Only when the whip menaced did they work. They were lazy, idle and depraved. If there were any not depraved already, prison soon made them so." Yet elsewhere Dostoevsky declares that even in prison a man can reform, if only he feels that you believe in his capacity to be good.

Amidst these beasts and monsters there shines the mild face of the young Circassian, Aley, deported to Siberia through a miscarriage of justice. "I remember my meeting with him as one of the brightest moments of my life", writes Dostoevsky, who had known such remarkable personalities as Belinsky, Turgenev, and Soloviev. He taught the chaste youth, Aley, to read Russian, and together with him

refreshed his soul with the words of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Love your enemies.

The decorative veils, through which, as a disciple of the French Utopians, he had formerly seen man, fell away in Siberia. Now man stood naked before him. The nervous, excitable Dostoievsky had to spend four years in the midst of grumbling, hot-tempered criminals, bloodthirsty murderers amongst whom Aley was a rare sunbeam. And all this simply because he had been a member of Petrashevsky's circle, had recited Pushkin's poetry and had burned with indignation at the brutality of the landlords. Nowhere else probably is there such clear evidence of the imperfection of human justice as in Dostoievsky's biography.

Critics are often in disagreement as to whether prison illuminated or crushed Dostoievsky's soul. That imprisonment was for Dostoievsky a dreadful ordeal "The House of the Dead" and his private letters sufficiently prove, but nothing could finally darken the light of his spirit. Among murderers and headsman he could find an Aley. He could remember the ploughman Marey. Under the rugged surface he discovered gold.

After four years of imprisonment came six years of exile which Dostoievsky had to spend in Semipalatinsk as a soldier. So passed the ten best years of his life. At the age of twenty-eight he was thrown into prison, and he was thirty-eight when at last he regained his freedom. From Semipalatinsk he wrote to a woman friend :

"When shall I at last be quite free? Perhaps when I do not need freedom any more? I am glad to find in my soul at least patience enough not to crave for worldly comforts, to wish for nothing but books, opportunity to write and to be alone for a few hours every day. I had to live almost five years in a herd, under the eye of a guard, and I was never completely alone for a single hour. Occasional solitude is, for the normal man, as necessary as food and drink; a forced communism makes us misanthropists."

In the same letter he confesses that in Siberia he suffered more from the impossibility of being alone than from the chains and hard labour. There were moments in his life when he hated every man he met, regarding him as a thief who with impunity was stealing from him the best years of his life. And he felt that it is not the man who is bad whose plight is the most terrible but the man who is himself aware that he is growing prejudiced, soured and evil, and yet is unable to overcome such tendencies.

At Semipalatinsk he began to write again and produced the nervous, strained tale, "The Friend of the Family".

### *Money*

Dostoievsky's whole life was haunted by poverty. If we glance through his letters we seem to have come upon an account-book; almost every page is full of figures, notes of debts, creditors' claims and publishers' promises of payment, fulfilled and unfulfilled. Always the same story: how much he has received

from a publisher, how much he has still to receive, how much other writers, living or dead, were paid; and often: If I don't get some money from so and so I shall have to hang myself or throw myself into the river. He complains that "coins creep like crabs in every direction". Always this piercing cry: Money! Money! Money! Even as a boy he had to supplicate his father for money, and later he begged from his publishers, his friends, his relations, from the women he loved. Dostoevsky always longed to compose his works carefully and without haste: "To sell one's work prematurely is suicide"—(in a letter to his brother). And in another letter: "I have sworn that, even if I have to hang myself, I will not write to order. Orders oppress one, ruin everything. I want every one of my works to be well done." "Selling work prematurely is suicide". . . . And yet in all his life he wrote only two works without hurry, without fixed time-limit: his first novel, "Poor People", and his last, "The Brothers Karamazov". All the rest he wrote beneath the goad of pressing need, sometimes when he had literally nothing to eat and his creditors gave him no peace, day or night. The heart bleeds when we read with what envy he alludes ever and again to those blessed ones such as Rafael who could work for years on one picture. Dostoevsky's life was spent in listening to reprimands for not handing in his manuscript in time, and his work was robbed of joy by the necessity of begging for advances, of squeezing out

money by dribs and drabs. He was forced to write himself into a nervous fever and his doctor's advice sounded to him like mockery: "To mend your damaged nerves you must lead a quiet, tranquil life without excitement." Expressions such as—"I have worked so much that my head is quite crazed and aches as if to split," or "I go down on my knees before you, send me money, otherwise I must hang myself", are commonplaces in his letters.

Once, when one of his publishers failed to send him, while abroad, the seventy-five roubles he had promised, Dostoievsky cried in despair: "Does he really think that I wrote to him about my wretched plight merely to display a pretty style? How can I write when I am starving, when to get enough money for a telegram I pawned my trousers. And yet to the devil with myself and my hunger! My wife is still giving the breast to her child and she had to go herself and pawn her last woollen coat. And besides it has been snowing here for the last two days, (I am not lying—you have only to look at the newspapers), and she may catch a cold. Can he really not understand that I am ashamed to describe all this to him? Doesn't he understand that he outrages not only me, but my wife also by this cruel behaviour, after all I have told him about my wife's needs and condition? I have offended him! Offended! . . . My publisher perhaps says: I must beg, not ask."

The letters of previous and subsequent years are full of such cries of despair—the cries of a man

driven, like a beast, to bay. In 1865, when he had already published the majority of his famous novels, he despatched a letter from Wiesbaden without a stamp, lamenting to his beloved, Apolinaria Suslova, that for three days he has been living only on tea ; he has not a penny ; he has heavy debts in the hotel ; they do not even give him candles on credit ; but to conceal his situation from these “ damned Germans ”, he leaves the hotel every day at three o’clock and returns at six so as not to let them suspect that he goes without any dinner. “ And so I have gone without dinner since the day before yesterday and have lived simply on tea. But even the tea they serve here is disgusting, without the samovar, my clothes and shoes are never brushed, when I ring nobody appears —and all the waiters treat me with ineffable, typically German hauteur.”

And yet—he never attempted to shake off the yoke of literature, never attempted to earn his daily bread by other means. He even took offence when offered some government post or invited to accept a secure income. After leaving the School of Engineering he worked for some time in an engineering company, but it was not long before he exclaimed : “ The work is as stupid as a potato,” dismissed every thought of such a career and tendered his resignation. But to literature he brought a tremendous, unflagging enthusiasm. He never doubted that his only duty and mission was as a writer. On his return to Petersburg, after penal servitude and exile, at once (in 1861)

he started, with his brother, to edit a journal, "Vremya", in which appeared his "The House of the Dead" and "Rejected and Despised". The journal proved a success, but in 1863 it was suppressed by the censor. The next year the brothers continued to edit their journal under the new title, "The Epoch", but it failed to win public sympathy, and when the chief editor, Michail, died, Dostoievsky had to shoulder the burden of his brother's liabilities and of his numerous family.

The financial difficulties grew worse because of Dostoievsky's ineptitude in money matters, and his ungovernable lust for gambling, which enslaved him for more than ten years.

Only towards the end of his life did his second wife, Anna Grigorievna, succeed in unravelling and clearing up the tangled clew of debts and claims.

*Maria Dimitrievna Isayeva*

(Born 1825—Died 1864)

It was in Semipalatinsk that Dostoievsky met his first wife, Maria Dimitrievna Isayeva, a delicate woman, consumptive and with the mark of death upon her, who had a husband, a son, and a load of debts. Isayev was a weak drunkard, an insignificant minor official in Semipalatinsk; Maria Dimitrievna was pretty, vivacious and cultured, a high-strung, passionate blonde. She quickly conquered Dostoievsky's heart, meeting him as she did at a time when

he was physically, mentally and spiritually starved, when the prison gates had closed behind him, but the door into life not yet opened. In a letter to Maria Dimitrievna we read :

“ The mere fact that a woman extended her hands to me, means a whole epoch in my life. The best of us men are sometimes—if I may say so—no better than blocks of wood. Woman’s heart, woman’s sympathy, her sensibility and her infinite gentleness—of which we men have no inkling, and which we often even despise in our crassness—with this there is nothing we can compare. I found all that in you. . . . Even if we sometimes quarrelled, it happened in the first place because I am an ungrateful swine and, secondly, because delicate, sensitive and irritable as you were, you were, to speak of nothing else, irritated by the company of those boors who could not understand you, and you could not refrain from rebelling with your usual energy against this injustice.”

At that time they were not yet married and Dostoievsky used to visit the Isayevs’ house as a friend. In his spiritual loneliness, amidst brutal criminals, he had hungered after the companionship and endearments of woman and he clung firmly to Maria Dimitrievna, for his love was never bestowed in half-measure. He writes to Marie Dimitrievna :

“ My heart is one that roots itself upon the object of its love and afterwards must be torn off with violence and bleeding.”

Then Isayev died, leaving his wife and his son Pasha quite penniless. Maria Dimitrievna was con-

sumptuous and weak. Dostoievsky had to help her. Immediately he sent her some money which he had succeeded in borrowing somewhere or other after strenuous efforts. A little later he became engaged to her. They were married in 1857, in spite of the remonstrances of Dostoievsky's relatives and friends, who tried to dissuade him from taking such a burden on his shoulders. There was no happiness in their stricken relationship. Both were delicate and only tormented each other. Yet after her death, Dostoievsky wrote to his friend Vrangel:

"Oh, my friend, her love for me knew no measure, and such too was my love for her, but we were unhappy. She had a peculiar, unstable, morbidly imaginative character, but nevertheless we loved each other and I must say that the unhappier we were the more tightly did we cling to one another. She was the noblest, most generous, most honest woman I have ever met."

Among Dostoievsky's female characters Katerina Ivanovna ("Crime and Punishment") reminds us most of his first wife in her hopeless poverty, her consumption, her fits of anger, her tears of repentance. Her external appearance, too, resembles the picture of Maria Dimitrievna: "She was a rather tall, slim and graceful woman . . . with a hectic flush in her cheeks. She was pacing up and down in her little room, pressing her hands against her chest; her lips were parched and her breathing came in nervous, broken gasps. Her eyes glittered as in fever and looked about with a harsh, immovable stare.

And that consumptive and excited face with the last flickering light of the candle-end playing upon it made a sickening impression."

Disillusionment soon followed. Maria Dimitrievna was very jealous, but far from being faithful herself. She was hostile towards her husband's relatives and this pained Dostoevsky, for his brother Michail, though he too condemned this marriage, still remained Dostoevsky's nearest and dearest friend. His stepson Pasha, a lazy and stupid boy, complicated the relationship still more, and Dostoevsky became aware that ideal love for a broken creature is easier than real life with her and gentle endurance day after day of her weaknesses, her nervous fits, her caprices and her jealousy. Maria Dimitrievna could tearfully kiss her husband's hands and tell him about her passion for some other man. She loved Dostoevsky's ideal "self", but loathed his epileptic body. And he, too, from the beginning to the end of their relations, loved her only as a sister. Particularly terrible is the fact that on the very night of the wedding Dostoevsky had a severe epileptic fit.

After a few years they separated and Maria Dimitrievna was merely a person to be spared, provided for and pitied. At this period Dostoevsky often turned to the chapter of the Bible where it is written that in Paradise men will live like God's angels: there will be no marriage and no desire. Maria Dimitrievna died of consumption in 1864. On the day of her funeral Dostoevsky, tortured by the thought that he

had not loved her unselfishly enough, wrote in his diary these thoughts on love and death :

" Masha lies on the table. To love our fellowmen as ourselves in accordance with Christ's commandment is impossible. . . . Man's self is the obstacle. Christ alone could do it, but Christ is eternal, the ideal of all ages, whom man imitates and whom according to nature's law he must imitate. Christ on earth was the incarnation of the ideal man. After his transfiguration it became absolutely clear that in his last and highest stage of development, man discovers, understands and with his whole being is convinced, that there is nothing more noble than complete annihilation of 'self', the giving it away to all and everyone entirely, retaining nothing. And that is the highest bliss. Thus the law of man's self is made to coincide with the law of humanity, and thus I and everyone must annihilate ourselves each for the other's sake. But at the same time each severally will attain the highest peak of individual development—thus, also, Christ attained Paradise. And the whole history of mankind considered in general, considered in each individual man, is simply the struggle towards this goal."

Yet a little further on he reiterates the same thought which he expressed in the beginning of his "Meditations" : " It is impossible to obey here on earth Christ's highest commandment to love all men as oneself. And so man must strive after an ideal that is contrary to his nature. But when a man does not

fulfil this law, i.e. does not sacrifice his 'Ego' in love to mankind or to some other being (Masha and I) he suffers and feels that he has sinned."

In these "Meditations" Dostoievsky, who knew no half-measure nor compromise, has laid bare with iron logic the tragedy of his first love.

*Apolinaria Prokofievna Suslova*

(Born 1840—Died 1918)

The woman who most deeply stirred the man Dostoievsky, who inspired most effectively his creative genius, was Apolinaria Prokofievna Suslova.

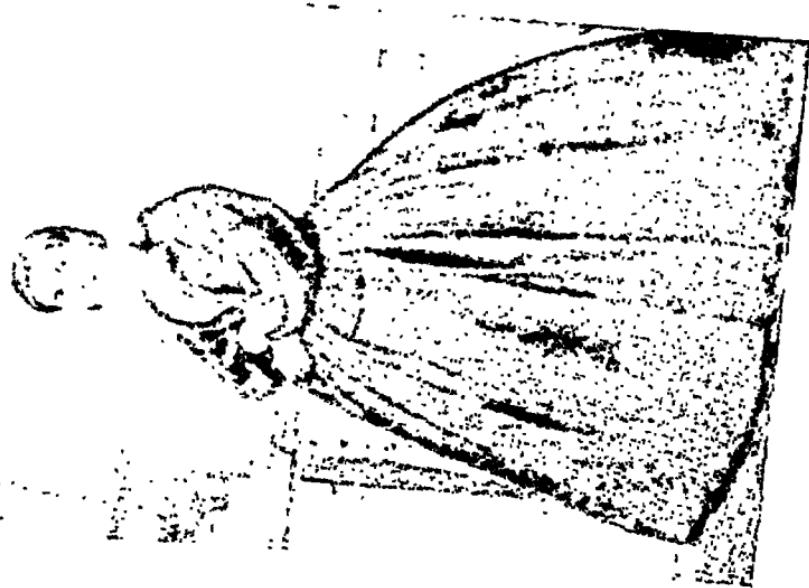
It is significant that of all the women with whom Dostoievsky fell in love not one was a gentle dove, a meek, simple Gretchen; all were more or less personalities, individuals with strongly marked spiritual traits.

Dostoievsky met Apolinaria Prokofievna in 1861, when his first wife was not yet dead, and he yearned for her even after his second marriage with Anna Grigorievna. He took final leave of her in 1866, but correspondence between them continued even later.

There are two well-known pictures of Suslova. A sensuously pretty, smooth, round face with soft, delicate features, a rather large mouth, small, soft hands, silken hair, a veiled, seductive look. And in the other, her youthful prime behind her, that same veiled look remains but her smile is gone and her



APOLINARIA PROKOFIEVNA SUSLOVA



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expression is sad and resigned. Her cheek bones are more sharply protruding, but the delicate grace still resides in the inclination of the head and in the posture of the hands. Those are hands that are accustomed to being kissed. She is no pure Virgin Mary. She resembles the one of whom it is written: unto her who loved much, much shall be pardoned.

Born in 1840, Apolinaria Prokofievna was nearly twenty years younger than Dostoevsky. Her father was a farm serf who had succeeded in freeing himself before the abolition of serfdom, and who in a short time had risen to be a wealthy factory owner. She was a typical woman of the 'sixties: independent, eager for intellectual activity. At that time female emancipation was in its first fever of excitement. George Sand with her independent life, freed from all ties, was accepted by many women as their ideal. Apolinaria Prokofievna attended lectures at the University and was well known as a writer. As a confirmed individualist, she notes contemptuously in her diary: "Life in great cities is a herd-life, and individuals lose their originality there." Yet at the same time she longs for some responsible, socially important work. After her disillusionment in love, she did not think of suicide, did not give way to melancholy, but made up her mind to settle down among peasants and open a school or a hospital and thus "do them some good at least, for to be alive and do no good for any one is unworthy of man"

(her diary). She demanded all, was never satisfied, and wanted her lover to be great and glorious—that is what attracted Dostoievsky so irresistibly to her. Suslova was a close counterpart of Dostoievsky, only without his genius. Like Dostoievsky she was a Russian of the Russians, like him, she hated cosmopolitanism, and like him, could not endure the average German: “This wretched nation is utterly forsaken by God.” Subservient to ideas, but at the same time tyrannically overbearing, she could torture a man to the last extreme and at the selfsame moment long to walk barefooted to the Kremlin. An artist in life she shaped her own life sometimes wrongly and disastrously, but always nobly and with majesty.

In 1861 Dostoievsky printed a story by her in his journal, “Vremya”. Soon after this their friendship became intimate. At that time Dostoievsky was no longer living with his first wife. In 1863 Apolinaria Prokofievna went off to Paris. Shortly after Dostoievsky followed her there, seeking to restore his health abroad and to escape, for the time being at least, from the oppressive dunning of his creditors. Suslova greeted him in Paris with the words: “You have come too late.” In Paris she had fallen in love with a very ordinary Spaniard, Salvador. This handsome animal soon wearied of her, and discarded her like an old glove. She, imperious and vain as she was, sought for some means of revenge. “I do not want to kill him,” she writes in her diary, “for that would be inadequate; I shall poison him with

a slow poison. I shall rob him of all joy, I shall humiliate him." She devised long and elaborate schemes to this end, but the dark-eyed Spaniard was so primitive and obtuse that Suslova's darts did not prick him in the slightest.

But she suffered. Dostoievsky came as her comforter. Strangely enough there was no outburst of jealousy. There in Paris he behaved towards her like a Prince Myshkin: kind, unselfish and sympathetic. To rescue the humiliated woman from her despair he took her to Italy, promising to behave like a brother. But he could not long support this role, and the flames of passion encroached ever further upon his gentleness. For some two months they travelled together and suffered together. Suslova did not conceal from him for one single moment that she still yearned, still languished for her beautiful Spaniard, but at the same time she provoked Dostoievsky, let him come near and so near. She ruled imperiously over him, intoxicating herself with the knowledge of her power. Beset by their passions they travelled through Italy and saw nothing, neither the famous blue sky, nor art, nor nature; Italian cities and monuments slipped past unnoticed. Too terrible was the conflict within themselves. When the inner eye is engrossed the outer eye sees nothing. "Infinitely oppressive. I view all the sights out of duty, as if getting through set tasks," says Dostoievsky. They found no harmony. Suslova's relations to Dostoievsky were like her feeling towards Paris. "I

hate it," she writes in her diary, "and yet I cannot tear myself away from it." It was hard for Dostoievsky and Suslova to part. There was a great spiritual affinity between them; but they could never live together. Their natures were in fact too similar: the edges in one found in the other no interstices to receive them.

Suslova suffered through Dostoievsky's ungovernable lust for gambling. When there was no more money to pay his debts, she pawned her ring and a gold chain. She was not mean in money matters and never reproached Dostoievsky for his reckless gambling.

These reckless, passionate relations are best revealed in some extracts from their letters. In 1865, a short time before the final rupture, when he himself at last saw clearly that it was impossible to bind his life to Apolinaria Prokofievna, he wrote to her sister:

"Apolinaria is very egoistic. Her egoism and self-love are colossal. She demands everything of men, every perfection, and does not pardon one single fault; yet she herself wishes to be free from all obligations towards her fellow men. She is always complaining to me that I am unworthy of her love, she scolds me and heaps reproaches upon me. Yet she herself greeted me in Paris in '63 with the words: 'You are a little too late,' and told me that she loved another, though only a fortnight before she wrote to me passionately of how much she loved me. I do not reproach her for loving another, but I do blame her for the note she sent my hotel, with this brutal phrase: 'You are too late.' I love her still to this moment, love her deeply, but I

wish not to love her any more. She is unworthy of my love. I pity her, because I see that she will always be unhappy. Nowhere will she find a companion and happiness. He who demands all of others, but absolves himself of every obligation, cannot find happiness. . . .

“ She called my letter cruel only because I ventured to disagree with her and to say it pained me. . . . She cannot admit equality in our relations. She always looks down on me as if from on high. There is nothing human in her relations to me. She knows that I love her still. Why then does she torture me? Well, let her not love me, but let her not torture me either.”

Suslova wrote to Dostoievsky :

“ You beg me not to write that I blush because of my love. Not only shall I never write such a thing, but I do assure you that never have I either written or done such a thing : I have not blushed because of my love, it was beautiful, it was even magnificent. I could only have written to you that I blush because of our earlier relations.”

She does not defend herself in this letter, and just because of this we see her in all her greatness : brilliant, courageous, proud and capable of a grandiose love.

A letter from Dostoievsky completes this revelation :

“ You have surrendered yourself to me and now you want to take revenge for it all your life—that is a purely feminine characteristic.”

And indeed this is how such women behave : they surrender themselves in their passionate love, claiming nothing, considering nothing. But then

the voice of reason makes itself heard: he was unworthy of this bestowal. And then there awakens hatred, and a desire to humble and to humiliate. They are so passionate and exuberant that they cannot reserve themselves for the one great moment, but after having surrendered themselves, they begin to reckon up and frequently conclude that the receiver was unworthy of the gift. Here is the clue to the tragedy of their loves. She, Dostoievsky's beloved, could never become the companion of his life, for Dostoievsky, although a genius, was depressed by petty cares and did not go through life surrounded by a halo. Yet this is what she asked of him and it was precisely on this account that Dostoievsky was so powerfully attracted to her, because he too craved for the impossible. Her demands spurred on his creative energy, but these demands could not be comprised in daily life. She was a splendid mistress, but she was quite unsuited for married life. Dostoievsky fell so passionately in love with her, she seemed to him so incredibly dazzling, that he told her in Paris: "It was by mistake that you fell in love with me."

Her feelings toward Dostoievsky swung between two antipodes. She adored the great writer, but to the man with his tragic, unbridled lust she could not and would not submit. And as she knew no moderation—either in praise or blame—in provoking, surrendering, wounding, she overstepped all limits. In this respect also she shows affinity with Dostoievsky

who, in his forty-eighth year, described his own character as hyperbolic.

Dostoievsky returned to Russia. She visited Paris again, going to lectures, museums and libraries. But her old fire was dead. "I feel that I am becoming more insignificant, that I am sinking into a foul morass. I do not feel any more the enthusiasm that used to sweep me off and vent itself in indignation" (her diary 14th October, 1864). Many men fell under her spell and with each she played for a little, seeking to ease the anguish of her heart. "When I think of what I was two years ago, I begin to hate Dostoievsky. He was the first who broke my faith. . . . But I long to escape from this sadness." At last in 1865 she returned to Russia and met Dostoievsky again in Petersburg. It was a sad event. Dostoievsky's first wife was dead. Suslova wrote in her diary: "To-day Fyodor Michailovich was here. We did nothing but wrangle and disagreed on everything. He asked for my hand in marriage and this simply made me angry."

In February 1866, Dostoievsky married his guardian angel, Anna Grigorievna Snitkina, but a few months later he wrote to Apolinaria:

"Oh, my beloved, I do not invite you to a cheap, inevitable pleasure. I respect (and I have always respected you) your great demands, but I know that your heart cannot help asking for life, and yet you regard men either as divine, infinitely glorious beings or else as scoundrels and impostors. . . . Au revoir, my life-long friend."

This is from one of his last letters to her. Disillusioned in love Suslova opened a girls' school in the country, and dismissed all thoughts of personal happiness. When the Minister of Education requested a report from the inspector of schools the reply stated : "Suslova is clearly an untrustworthy person, for in the first place she wears blue spectacles, in the second place she wears her hair short ; she has too liberal opinions and never goes to church." The school was closed. But her restless brain could not accept leisured ease. She was one of the first women to enter the University and undertake serious studies.

She kept her feminine charm all her life. When forty years old, she could fascinate a young writer of twenty-four, V. V. Rozanov. A year before Dostoevsky's death she married him. They spent six years together, but she could not be a good wife, a life-mate ; she was far too independent. Her sharply accentuated self stood in the way. She could not put up with domestic life and deserted Rozanov. Yet she wished to retain her power over him, and when Rozanov wished to marry a second time she refused to grant him a divorce. How well Dostoevsky knew her is revealed in a remark he made to her in Petersburg shortly before the final separation : "Should you accept marriage you will never support it, within three days you will hate your husband and will desert him." Several times Dostoevsky strove to portray Apolinaria Suslova's beauty, shifting and full of contrasts : in Aglaya and Nastasya Filippovna

(“The Idiot”) and especially in Polina (“The Gambler”).

*Anna Vasilievna Krukovskaya*

(Born 1847—Died 1887)

In Dostoievsky's whirlwind life, in that thunderous midnight symphony, his short acquaintanceship with Anna Vasilievna was like a brief idyllic intermezzo. Dostoievsky was then helping to edit “The Epoch”. He was worn out with toil and worry. One day he received two tales signed Yury Orbelov. They were vividly written and displayed distinct talent. The editor was pleased with them and published them both. Shortly after the authoress came in person to the editor's office. She was Anna Vasilievna Korvin Krukovskaya, a young woman of great beauty, the sister of the afterwards famous mathematician, Sonya Kovalevskaya. She was the daughter of a wealthy landowner; clever, courageous, independent, remarkably beautiful, with long fair hair and sparkling blue-grey eyes—from her childhood the belle of every ball. In 1865 Dostoievsky became friendly with his young collaborator, who was then living in Petersburg, with her parents and sister. He was delighted with both sisters. They knew no cares, were cultured and full of laughter and vitality. He had recently lost his wife. Her scenes, reproaches, sickness and cares, had left him utterly weary and his love affair with Suslova had tortured him. When rich, distinguished relations paid their visits, Dostoievsky felt awkward

in General Krukovskaya's house, but he was happy in the company of the two charming sisters and often visited them at their palatial mansion in Petersburg. He would discuss Pushkin and various religious problems with them, and once when Anna Vasilievna, more to tease the writer than out of conviction, defended nihilism, he seized his hat and ran away, promising never to return. Nevertheless—he was back again in two days. Dostoievsky had faith in Anna Vasilievna's talent. He wrote in a letter to her: "You are a writer. That in itself means much and you must not be unjust to yourself. Yet you must read and learn. Read serious books. Life will do the rest."

Vivacious Anna so dazzled and captivated Dostoievsky that he never noticed that the younger, intellectually gifted Sonya had fallen madly in love with him. To give him pleasure little Sonya learned to play Beethoven's "*Sonata Pathétique*", Dostoievsky's favourite piece of music, but whilst she was playing, happy and excited, Dostoievsky in the next room, totally oblivious of the sonata, was passionately declaring his love to her sister. Anna refused quite categorically. She loved and admired Dostoievsky, but still more did she love and admire herself. She was afraid that this man, with his thin, grey, freckled face, his glittering eyes, his nervous hands, his sudden, uncontrolled movements, would consume her. She felt that if they lived together she would have to renounce her egoism, and this the proud girl could

not do. In vain did Dostoievsky seek Anna's hand in marriage, in vain did Sonya play the "Sonata Pathétique". They parted. Years went by. Sonya studied mathematics abroad and later married. Anna played an important part in the French Revolution of 1871. Her youthful egoism and dreams of glory soon faded. She was now attracted by high ideals, by work for the common good. She married a well known communer, Jaquelart, and worked as a sister of mercy in the same hospital where her husband was doctor. In the times of the Commune she was the president of the Committee for the instruction of women and fearlessly signed her name under its proclamations. In the chronicles of the Paris communes and in literary works which depict the period round about 1871 this ardent and beautiful Russian revolutionary appears under the name of Jeanne. When Sonya got over her childish infatuation, and Dostoievsky's wounded feelings were healed, the fiery blaze of passion sank into a quiet, sober friendship. Dostoievsky corresponded with both sisters. They received many suggestions from him, and when troubles came their way he comforted both of them with words of true friendship. Proud, self-confident Katerina Ivanovna ("The Brothers Karamazov") is perhaps a likeness of Anna Vasilievna.

*Anna Grigorievna Snitkina*

(Born 1846—Died 1919)

For Maria Dimitrievna Dostoievsky had felt a compassionate love, for Apolinaria Prokofievna, a passionate love, for Anna Vasilievna an illusory love; for Anna Grigorievna he felt a friendly love. And all these feelings he experienced to the uttermost.

Anna Grigorievna was one of these admirable women who make heroism a duty. She was wife, mother and friend to Dostoievsky. This serene, quiet woman has given us the truest revelation of her character in these words of her old age: "There is nothing more wonderful in life than love. You must choose your god once and for all time and serve him all your life. I chose Dostoievsky when I was eighteen years old. Now I am seventy and even yet, in every thought and in every deed, I belong to him alone. I belong to his memory, to his work, to his children and to his children's children, and for me every tiny fragment of him contains him all. Nor have I ever known any other worship except this alone. . . . He was not only a god, he was a man too, who like every ordinary man had everyday traits and failings, and he was not always great. Often, very often he was ailing, capricious, stubborn, like a child ignorant of life. In such moments I had to take upon myself the full weight of life, life's whole burden rested upon my shoulders alone, and I always



ANNA GRIGORIEVNA

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tried to conceal from him all cares and material concerns. I did not permit myself to be ill."

Even before Anna Grigorievna became acquainted with Dostoievsky her friends nicknamed her "Nyetochka Nyezvanov", so enraptured was she with Dostoievsky's works.

She brought order into Dostoievsky's chaotic life, gave him the peace he then needed most. In the fourteen years of their married life Dostoievsky published seven thick volumes, i.e. more than half of all that he wrote. She was one of those women who do not shrink from deep wounds and gangrenes, but who bend calmly and efficiently over every sore and cleanse and heal it. To-day perhaps Anna Grigorievna's life may not seem so greatly heroic: at least she was privileged to save a Dostoievsky! But let us not forget that at that time no one yet knew that Dostoievsky was one of the greatest writers in Europe. At that time publishers paid him only a quarter of what they paid Turgenev.

She was not pretty. Her movements were rather awkward. Her face had the pallid colour common to those who do intellectual work. But her forehead was high, smooth and serene, and, as is frequently the case in women of no striking beauty, her eyes were wonderfully expressive and bright. She had a very determined chin and large hands accustomed to toil and to keep a firm hold on the reins of life. She had one of those faces which grow more attractive with the passage of time, which are moulded by life;

one that gives the same pleasure as a bright, tidy room, where there is nothing showy, but where everything is spotless and in its place.

Dostoievsky was staggering under a load of debts. His brother was dead. He had no dear friend or helper. His step-son Pasha who was still under his charge, plagued him importunately. His ill-starred love for Suslova tormented him, and the epilepsy with which he had been afflicted ever since his penal servitude, was utterly enfeebling him. In a letter he confesses in despair: "My epilepsy has grown into a deformity." This disease, an incurable one at that time and little studied, tortured him mentally even more than physically. He never felt at ease, and the fear of an attack was more dreadful than the attack itself. He has depicted this illness several times in his novels, always in the same terribly realistic colours, but in three different aspects. The little fear-haunted Nelly, who stirs our pity so strangely ("Insulted and Injured"), the deranged servant Smerdiakov, who fills us with loathing, and, lastly, saintly Prince Myshkin, a nineteenth century apostle of Christ, all suffer from epilepsy.

Dostoievsky met Anna Grigorievna on the 4th of October, 1866. By the 8th November he was wooing her, and on the 15th February they were married. Their first meeting took place under very prosaic circumstances. Dostoievsky advertised for a stenographer. Anna Grigorievna Snitkina applied. She had attended a school of stenography, and was resolved

to earn her own living, since she wished to be independent.

Their first appointment was depressing. It seemed to Anna Grigorievna that Dostoievsky did not heed her at all; he never looked her in the face, and he continually forgot her name. The pale, earnest girl of eighteen wrote away at her little desk with never a smile. The writer asked her to read the typed copy. In her excitement she made mistakes and Dostoievsky rebuked her with peevish nervousness for her errors. She returned home humiliated and unhappy. She had never imagined that the great writer was so gloomy. Still they continued to work together. Every day from 12 until 4. Her quiet efficient manner assisted the work and lessened Dostoievsky's own nervousness, but he ceased to forget her name only towards the end of a month. The first novel he dictated to her was "The Gambler". He was the victim of a dreadful mania for gambling. It had come out violently in his wild escapade with Suslova. This novel clearly could not have served to idealise the author in the eyes of the young stenographer. But nothing could daunt her. She had chosen her path. Once while resting after the work and drinking tea together, they happened to talk about marriage, and Dostoievsky asked her, half in earnest, half in jest, what kind of woman he should marry, a clever one or a good one? "A clever one, of course," replied Anna Grigorievna. But Dostoievsky shook his head: "No, if I had to make the choice, I should choose

not a clever one but a good one who would love and pity me." This Anna Grigorievna did all her life, although she was clever too in her own way.

The first months of their married life were embittered by the step-son Pasha, who was only a few years younger than his step-mother. He treated his step-father as a foolish old man, and his step-mother as an intruder who had no right to be there. But she bore everything with great patience, putting her trust in her own strength and in a happier future. Her good influence on Dostoievsky is evident from the start. The epileptic fits which had previously attacked him every week, now came at intervals of months. Literary historians, with the exception of Grosman, have misrepresented Anna Grigorievna. They describe her as a narrow, uninteresting, business woman. Dolinin says that Dostoievsky in parting from Suslova and marrying Snitkina exchanged poetry for prose. These criticisms are unjust and erroneous. In Dostoievsky's letters to Anna Grigorievna there are scattered amid the figures and accounts words of thankfulness and tenderness :

" You are my whole future—my hope and my faith, my happiness and my joy. . . . I am yours, I am faithful to you, for ever faithful. I trust you, I cling to you as to my future." (1866.) He called her—her too, as well as Suslova—his life companion. He realised that only her strong guiding hand could save him from shipwreck in the storms of life. Shortly after their marriage he wrote to her : " God has entrusted you

to me so that none of the seeds slumbering in your soul, none of the riches of your heart may be lost—but may bear rich and manifold fruit. He has given you to me that you may redeem me from my very great sins, and that I may give you back to Him, a fair, earnest, upright being, free from all that mars the spirit."

The diary and memoirs of Anna Grigorievna have now been made public, and we feel on every page her joy in sacrificing herself, in surrendering everything to ease the tortured life of the beloved husband and adored writer. She, herself, chose her fate and never complained that the burden weighed heavily on her young shoulders. This quiet, unassuming self-sacrifice makes her diary, and especially her memoirs, sacred books, in spite of the very naïve, even monotonous style. It is not just the fact that she endured Dostoevsky's caprices, sickness and quite unfounded jealousy that makes her great, but her manner of enduring. One might object that it is impossible to judge true character from a diary (George Sand helps out her memoirs and diary with the most disarming falsehoods), but Anna Grigorievna was one of those women who cannot lie, even if they would. Besides, Dostoevsky's own letters give the same testimony. He describes her as youthful and ingenuous, but with an unlimited capacity for self-sacrifice. "The difference between our ages is formidable—twenty and forty—but still I am growing more and more convinced that I shall make her happy. She has a heart

and knows how to love." This judgement is especially significant, because he wrote it to his former beloved, Apolinaria Suslova. He repeats almost the same words to his best friend, Maykov : " I fear that she will soon grow tired of me. . . . She is stronger and deeper than I believed her to be, and she is often my true *guardian angel*. Yet sometimes she is very childlike, quite charming and unaffected, and I am not always able to respond."

As a revelation of their married life, we may quote some lines from Anna Grigorievna's diary. She records on the 11th of May, 1868 : " I must say that I go very early to bed, but Fedya sits till two o'clock and even later. When he comes to bed, he wakens me for 'Good-night'. Then begin long talks, tender words, laughter and kisses, and this half-hour or hour is the most intimate and the most happy moment of our day. I tell him my dreams, he—his impressions of the previous day and we are terribly happy."

To escape from his creditors and the hatred of his step-son, whom Dostoievsky treated very indulgently, as well as to mend his broken health, Dostoievsky, soon after the marriage, went abroad with his wife for four years (1867-1871). They lived in Geneva, Milan, Florence, Dresden and Baden Baden. During this period abroad, two great novels were written, "The Possessed" and "The Idiot". Those years were full of troubles. In that difficult time Anna Grigorievna showed her unflinching tenacity and iron will. She was not original, but she combined depth

of feeling; and interest in the arts with great practical ability and a power of orientation in everyday affairs. Hers was not a winged soul, but to Dostoievsky's she gave the power to extend its pinions to their mightiest sweep.

Dostoievsky's works, from "The Gambler" to "The Brothers Karamazov", passed through her hands, and if we admire these works, we cannot refuse our admiration to this woman. Some of her fundamental qualities are reflected in the strong, unselfish, and self-sacrificing Dasha ("The Possessed"). Dostoievsky has nowhere portrayed her in full length, but he dedicated to her his life's Bible—"The Brothers Karamazov".

During this travel abroad Dostoievsky, as on his former travels, was attacked by his mania for gambling. At times it absorbed him to the exclusion of everything else. His young, inexperienced wife, Anna Grigorievna, who was now far advanced in pregnancy, journeyed with the sick, restless Dostoievsky from town to town and even found strength to stenograph his novels and to arrange and transcribe his manuscripts. In her throes she suffered more for her husband than for herself: if only the excitement and anxiety might not provoke an epileptic fit! One night, awakened by the dreadful pain, she gently roused her husband, who opened his eyes and muttered: "Oh, poor little thing!" Then he turned over and fell asleep again. She knew how vital the night's rest was to him and, not daring

to waken him again, she set herself with clenched teeth to endure the agony till morning.

It is touching to see how she strives to justify Dostoievsky's terrible mania for gambling in her diary and memoirs. They had so little money, and it was natural that having once won a considerable sum, he should hope to win again, and so without any trouble shake off the yoke of poverty. She could even find an excuse for his always losing and bringing back not money but fresh debts: had he not been so nervous and impatient, he would surely have won, and how could he help being nervous, when the creditors and the publishers were harassing him and left him not a moment's peace?

He left his wife in Dresden, and went off alone on a tour of gambling dens. He gambled in Hamburg, gambled in Baden Baden, gambled in Saxon-les-Bains. From one of these places he wired his wife asking for money for his train fare. But, after getting the money and when he was already on his way to the station, he turned aside into a casino and lost it all. Poverty did not break Anna Grigorievna's serene strength. She quietly went and pawned her jewellery, and when all the jewels were gone—her last winter clothes. It was not poverty but something else that made her worry over her husband's gambling mania. She dreaded that the nervous tension might ruin his health. Her heart trembled as she saw him return pale and worn, scarcely able to keep his feet, begging desperately for money (he used to give her

immediately all his earnings). As soon as he got the money, he hurried back to gamble and lose and then beg for more until finally the last farthing was lost. He was fully aware of the curse of his vice. When he had lost everything, he threw himself down on his knees before his wife and begged forgiveness.

The letters he wrote at this period to his friend Maykov and to his wife make painful reading. "Anna, promise never to reveal these letters. I do not wish my baseness to be the talk of the nation. A writer is a writer. . . . Save me, save me this one last time!" They are terrible cries, broken with self-reproach. These letters were published only after Anna Grigorievna's death, she herself never published one of them.

In Geneva, in 1868, Dostoevsky's first child, his daughter Sonya, was born. He loved the baby passionately. What he endured in the night his wife gave birth to the child is portrayed in Shatov's experience ("The Possessed"). Often he himself swaddled the infant, carried her about, sang her lullabies, and sat for long hours at her little cot. Three months later the child died. Dostoevsky was even more inconsolable than the mother. Anna Grigorievna writes in her memoirs: "He was crushed like a woman, wept aloud, bent over his darling's stiff body, covering its pale little face and hands with burning kisses. Never had I seen him in such extreme despair. . . . Fyodor Michailovich was terrible to behold, he had shrunk and aged so during the child's illness. . . .

He had cypresses planted round her little grave and erected a white marble cross. We visited the little grave every day, brought flowers and wept over it." Dostoievsky wrote to his friend Maykov: "As time goes on my memories torture me more and more, and the image of little dead Sonya becomes more vivid. Were I to have another child, I do not know for certain whether I could love it, I do not know where I could find love for it. I want only Sonya. I cannot grasp the fact that she is no more, that I shall never see her again."

In Italy, in 1869, his second daughter, Luba, was born. During Anna Grigorievna's confinement Dostoievsky cared for the young mother like a woman. In case it might disturb her he hid away from her his copy of Tolstoy's "War and Peace" because in it Princess Volkonska dies in childbirth.

Anna Grigorievna worked with her husband, spending cloudless hours with him in the service of his art. They read together, and visited art galleries. She made her influence on his passionate nature go deeper and deeper and constantly took a stronger line in settling his financial troubles.

She never doubted that her husband loved her and was faithful to her, but the excitement with which he received and read Suslova's last letters saddened and offended her.

In her diary, 9th May, 1867, she speaks of it simply and frankly: "I came home to read the letter which I had found on Fedya's desk (of course it is dishonest

to read my husband's letters, but I did—I could not help it!). It was a letter from S. When I had read it, I was so upset that I did not know what to do. I went cold all over, I shuddered, I even cried. I was terrified that the old ties were being renewed, and his love for me would fade away. Lord God, save me from such a catastrophe! I felt utterly wretched. Just to think of it makes my heart bleed! Lord God, anything but that; it would be too terrible for me to lose his love! I had just time to wipe away my tears when Fedya returned. He looked at me greatly surprised. I told him I had colic. (Strangely enough I knew that he would be back at once.) I told Fedya I did not feel well, that I had a fever. He begged me to go to bed, got very alarmed and wanted to know what had caused it. (He loves me still, he always gets alarmed when there is anything the matter with me.) He told me not to eat certain things. (He was trying to heal spiritual suffering with diet.) I felt better and we went out together to the library. . . .”

These were the most critical hours of their married life. But she concealed her jealousy and fears heroically. She was always ready for fresh sacrifices. And in the end she won the day.

*The Serene Evening of His Life*

In 1871 Dostoevsky returned to Petersburg with Anna Grigorievna and his daughter Luba. The last

ten years of his life were the happiest and most tranquil. Their radiance is reflected in the words of the aged Zosima: "Little by little through life's great mystery our old woes pass into quiet, calm joy, the boiling blood of youth gives place to quiet, placid age: each day I bless the sunrise and as of old my heart delights therein, but even more do I love the sunset, the long, slanting rays and the quiet, mellowed memories that they bring with them, the dear images of all my long and blessed life, and above all the Divine Truth, softening, reconciling, forgiving! My life draws to an end, I see it and hear it. But with every day that is left me I feel my earthly life merging into a new infinite, unknown, future life, the presentiment of which sets my soul quivering with rapture, my mind glowing and my heart weeping with joy."

The volcanic fire had turned into a great, steady flame. In winter he lived in Petersburg, in the summer, at Staraya Rusa. Sometimes he went abroad, but never again did he enter a gambling den. The demon of gambling was vanquished. Two sons were born, Fyodor (1871-1892) and Alexey (1875-1878). The latter was epileptic and died at the early age of three.

Dostoievsky was grief-stricken. Anna Grigorievna notes in her memoirs: "He loved Alexey with a strange almost morbid love, as if foreboding his early death. My husband's grief was intensified by the fact that the boy died of epilepsy inherited from his father.

Outwardly Fyodor Michailovich was very resigned and bore this blow of fate manfully, but I dreaded that this outwardly-controlled sorrow which was all the time eating out his heart would ruin his health, which was already so poor."

Encouraged by his wife, Dostoievsky retired with Soloviev to the monastery "Optina Pustyn" and there recovered his tranquillity in religious meditation. Anna Grigorievna's unquenchable grief at the death of her little son is portrayed by Dostoievsky in "The Brothers Karamazov": the elder Zosima, whose love was the human heart, could give ease to all, except to the mother whose little son was dead. He tried to soothe her anguish by telling her that her son was now an angel in the kingdom of God. But the mother only wept all the more bitterly. She wanted to see the little one, even for once and never again, even through a chink in the door, or even just to hear in the next room the soft pitter-patter of his little bare feet on the floor. . . .

Dostoievsky was a loving father. While staying in Staraya Rusa he bought a little barrel-organ for the children, and in the evenings used to play it and dance round it with them. In the mornings while he ate his breakfast, the children had to come and tell him all the sights and adventures of their morning walk. Anna Grigorievna says in her memoirs, that she never saw anyone with the same capacity for adapting himself to the speech of children or for entering into their world. The buying and decorating

of the Christmas tree, the children's acclamations at the candles and gifts were his purest joy.

Once, when the family had gone to Staraya Rusa, Dostoievsky, staying alone in Petersburg, wrote to his wife that sometimes his yearning for his children was so strong that he had to get up from his desk, go to the next room and caress their empty cots with his gaze.

Each day now conformed to a well-arranged plan. He wrote almost solely during the night, when the noise and stir of the day were hushed. In the morning he rose at eleven, went to see his children, and set off for a stroll. In the afternoon he dictated to his wife what he had written the previous night. Anna Grigorievna tells us about their mutual work in her memoirs : "I always loved working with my husband. I was proud that I was able to help him, that I was the first to hear the work straight from its creator's lips. Normally Fyodor Michailovich dictated immediately from the manuscript. But if he was specially pleased with a passage, or if he was in doubt as to its merit, he would read me the whole passage before beginning to dictate, and this was far more impressive than the customary dictation."

He cleared himself of his harassing financial encumbrances, although his last debt was paid off only in 1881, i.e., in the year of his death. In 1873 he contributed to the journal, "Grazhdanin," ("The Citizen") and from 1876 until 1877 he published a journal of his own under the title, "An Author's

Diary," in which he discussed the various social and political questions of the day.

On every page he records his life's deepest conviction: that each of us is answerable for everything that takes place. It is amazing that Dostoevsky's fiery energy, which had expended itself so fiercely all his life, so far from being a spent force in his later years, still gave him the strength to hail every noble enterprise, and to cry out against every injustice and violence, down to the cruelty of the butcher, who, while taking a calf to the slaughter house, seated himself upon the animal and "sat there as comfortably as in an easy chair".

In "An Author's Diary" he gives his candid opinion on child-beggars, on unjust verdicts in the courts, on the rights of women, on the importance of foreign cultures and most of all on the mission of the Russian nation. These little self-contained pamphlets, to which he himself was the sole contributor, circulated widely. He received many hundreds of letters from people of all classes, full of heart-felt gratitude for his efforts to awaken the nation's conscience and for not fearing to call things by their proper name.

An aureole of glory formed about him. Every day he received many callers, listened to their woes and endeavoured to point out the right path. He never turned anyone away. He even comforted a girl student who had failed in her geography examination. The Academy of Sciences elected him (somewhat

late) to its fellowship, and the Czar's court—surely the irony of fate?—extended its favour to him. Czar Alexander II wished his sons to meet Dostoievsky, in the hope that he might influence the princes' development in the desired direction. At this time Dostoievsky was engrossed with "The Brothers Karamazov", and was avoiding new contacts. But the wish of the "Czar Liberator" was for him an order. He always spoke enthusiastically of Alexander II, who had realised his youthful dream of freedom for the serfs—the dream for which he had been fated to suffer so cruelly.

In this last period of his life he wrote "A Raw Youth" (1875) and "The Brothers Karamazov" (1880).

He reached the pinnacle of his fame at the Pushkin festival in Moscow on the 8th June, 1880. A monument to Pushkin was to be unveiled and Dostoievsky was invited to speak on the day of the ceremony. Anna Grigorievna could not accompany him; the little delicate children kept her at home. But Dostoievsky wrote to her every day—sometimes even twice a day—telling her everything about the celebrations in Moscow.

He had worked long and carefully at his speech. As frequent callers gave him no peace in Petersburg, he went to Staraya Rusa, and there locked himself in to spend some days alone with Pushkin. The many variants and rough sketches of this discourse which have been preserved show that in this work he wished

to reveal his whole self, probably foreboding that this would be his last opportunity of expressing himself, of uniting the scattered sparks into one great flame. On the day of the ceremony he delivered his discourse in a quiet but clear voice full of suppressed emotion. He was not a flamboyant, dramatic orator—he did not make the walls tremble nor his audience weep; but his simple, peculiarly personal way of speaking never failed to fascinate his listeners. Each listener had always the feeling that Dostoevsky was speaking directly to him, directly of him. This time, too, at the Pushkin ceremony the crowd of thousands held their breath, feeling that every word sprang straight from the speaker's soul, feeling that this man of medium height with his glowing cheeks, his strange inward-searching look, his sensitive nervous hands, his sunken temples and breast, his thin hair and small, unkempt beard was all consumed with the fire of his spirit, and gave burning expression to all that had been experienced in mute anguish by every one of his listeners. He spoke of the genius of Pushkin, of the mission of Russia, of the future brotherhood of nations and of the duties of man : "Humble yourself, you man of pride, and you, idler, betake yourself to work!"

The applause seemed as if it would never end. A young man rushed to the platform to thank him, but fainted with excitement. The next speaker chose not to speak.

Dostoevsky received an enormous laurel wreath.

Late that night, after the conclusion of the ceremony, he returned to his room utterly exhausted. He himself did not know it, but this speech was the last chord in his work's symphony. As after his first day of creation, so now after this his last, he found no rest. All the strings of his soul were still sounding, all his nerves were trembling. He had still something else to do. For the others the ceremony had had its conclusion there in the hall, but he had yet to find a conclusion for himself.

After a short sleep he got up, took his laurel wreath and went alone to Pushkin's monument. The night was clear and warm, the streets deserted and quiet, strangely refreshing after the happy, crowded day. He reached Pushkin's monument. Painfully he raised the heavy laurel wreath, and, laying it at the feet of his great master, bowed down deeply before him.

On the 8th of February, 1881, Dostoievsky, as was his custom, was working late at night. He had many projects in mind. He had to write the second part of "The Brothers Karamazov", in which Alyosha would be the central figure; he was eager to write a book on Christ and to continue "An Author's Diary".

He dropped his pen, searched for it, had to move a heavy book-case. In the exertion an artery in his weak lungs burst and haemorrhage ensued.

Doctors and friends, for all their anxiety, could do nothing for him. On the 10th of February at 7 a.m.

he called softly to his wife: "Anna, I cannot sleep. For three hours I have lain awake thinking all the time and now I see clearly that to-day I must die. . . . Light a candle, Anna, and give me the Gospel." Faithful to his habit he opened his New Testament at random and read: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"—"Do you hear, Anna, suffer it to be so— So I am going to die," he said and shut the book. He took leave of his friends and children and gently caressed his wife: "Don't forget, Anna, I have always loved you with all my heart and I have never, not even in my thoughts, been unfaithful to you."

On the 10th of February at 8 p.m. he passed into eternity.

Dostoievsky is of the fraternity of such great, fiery spirits as Michelangelo, Van Gogh and Beethoven, who burned themselves up in giving light to others.

It is Dostoievsky himself who best reveals himself. When he was just a youth he wrote to his brother: "My heart swells to comprehend the grandeur of life."—Then later, on his return from Siberia: "I can do nothing by halves: only to say a part of something is equivalent to saying nothing." And towards the end of his life he confessed to his friend Maykov, with whom he was always most frank: "I have a despicable character, too passionate. Everywhere and in everything I go to extremes. All my life I have gone beyond the limit."

And in this man who reveals himself as a sinner and all too human, who is near to us as a struggler and a sufferer, we see a comrade to walk with us in our sorrows, and not a false demigod set far beyond our reach, in a cold, rarefied atmosphere.

His life, in retrospect, is like a continuation of the Book of Job : poverty, imprisonment, sentence of death, penal servitude, exile, passion of love, demon of gambling, incurable disease. A hundredth part of this had sufficed to corrode the soul of an average man, and stifle his spirit. But Dostoevsky did not bear his cross with bowed head ; he took it from his shoulders, thrust it into the earth, mounted upon it, and stood but the higher.

### CHAPTER III

## MAN, THE CENTRE OF HIS COSMOS

### *Nature and Town*

MAN and his destiny stand in the centre of Dostoevsky's cosmos. For him man is not one of nature's countless phenomena, but the centre of all creation, the sun, around which everything revolves. In man lies the riddle of the universe, and who unriddles him solves at the same time the enigma of God. Man with his burning breath has fired the forests, dried up the seas, scorched the green fields ; he stands in a wilderness, his hands stretched out to God.

“ Men are alone on earth—that is what is dreadful ! ‘ Is there a living man in the country ? ’ cried the Russian hero. I cry the same, though I am not a hero, and no one answers my call. They say the sun gives life to the universe. The sun is rising and—look at it, is it not dead ? Men are alone—around them is silence—that is the earth ! ” Thus says Dostoevsky in one of his last works, “ *A Gentle Spirit* ”.

Solitary man and around him a wilderness : that is the universe of Dostoevsky. His novels contain no portrayal of nature, no mystic twilights, no poetic descriptions nor lyrical prose, such as Turgenev,

Dostoievsky's great contemporary and rival, employed with such mastery. The man of Dostoievsky has burned up nature around him. The novels include a few landscapes but only as reflections of what is passing in the hero's soul. Such is the description of the steppe in "*The House of the Dead*": "On the further side of the river the steppes stretched blue into the distance, it was a gloomy and desert view. . . . In winter, especially in dull weather, it was dreary to look over the river and at the far-away bank on the other side. There was something poignant and heart-rending in this wild, desolate landscape. But it was almost more painful when the sun shone brightly on the immense expanse of snow. One longed to fly away into that expanse which stretched from the other side of the river, an untrodden plain for 1,200 miles to the south."

In the exuberant, immature "*White Nights*" and in "*The Insulted and Injured*" the thunder still rumbles and the lilac blossoms, but the more mature the work, and the later the period to which it belongs, the further does nature recede. "*The Idiot*"<sup>1</sup> is a novel of 620 pages and in it only three passages contain a few insignificant lines describing nature. On page 222: "At the beginning of summer in Petersburg there are sometimes exquisite days, bright, still, and hot. And by good fortune this day was one of those rare days." On page 363: "It was a soft,

<sup>1</sup> *The Novels of Fyodor Dostoievsky*. Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett. In twelve volumes. Published by William Heinemann.

warm, clear night, a Petersburg night in early June, but in the thick, shady avenue where he was sitting it was almost dark." Then again on page 458 and that is all. In "The Possessed" we unexpectedly come upon a spring night with blossoming junipers; and an autumn night by the lake in the old park where the wind howls amid the heavily swaying pinetops, is symbolical of the dark, possessed spirits. In "The Brothers Karamazov" the only description of nature is the starry night by the white monastery walls, where Alyosha undergoes spiritual rebirth. In the technically flawless story, "A Gentle Spirit", written four years before his death, there is not one word about nature.

In the novels of Dostoievsky we are normally quite unaware of the season of year in which the action is taking place. No one can say, unless he had devoted special attention to it, whether the leaves were in the bud or in the sere when Katerina Ivanovna proudly rejected Ivan and little Liza Hohlakova so artlessly revealed her love to Alyosha. And none can tell whether men were numbed with frost or parched with summer-heat, when Nastasya Filipovna burnt her thousands in the fireplace.

There are no seasons in the soul of man: for it there is no budding or fading, it draws no fresh sap from the earth; but summer and winter, day and night it wrestles desperately with its God.

There are no sunlit paths and shady groves, but paved streets and gloomy houses; no smell of earth

and refreshing showers but burning concrete, choking dust, suburban inns, stuffy, airless boarding-house rooms. Dostoievsky's men live in towns, but the town at least is a creation of man, is only a part of himself, a particular point in his tragic line of destiny. And most often it is Petersburg that looms up, "the most abstract and fictitious of all towns". But we shall search in vain for actual descriptions of Petersburg's streets and buildings. Dostoievsky did not photographically describe the cathedrals and squares of Petersburg as Zola and Victor Hugo did in the case of Paris. He paints in words a chimerical city with the terrible, visionary power of Van Gogh in his medium of line and colour. If we think of Dostoievsky's Petersburg we see no bridges, monuments or church domes, but we feel that in this dank, foggy atmosphere are born maddening thoughts, germs of crime, burning despair and yearning for holiness. This is one of his numerous descriptions of Petersburg : "It was a gloomy story, one of those gloomy and distressing dramas which are so often played out unseen, almost mysterious, under the heavy sky of Petersburg, in the dark secret corners of the vast town, in the midst of the giddy ferment of life, of dull egoism, of clashing interests, of gloomy vice and secret crimes, in that lowest hell of senseless and abnormal life." ("Insulted and Injured.")

Dostoievsky paints not landscapes but portraits. Separate figures and whole hordes throng his novels. As in the "Last Judgement" by some old master,

we see a pell-mell mass of humanity driven together by a visible or invisible hand, filling the whole surface of the canvas. It is this that makes the reading of Dostoievsky's novels difficult: it is not easy to embrace all this crowd. In "The Possessed" there are more than forty persons, in "The Idiot" there are nineteen central characters and as many secondary ones: servants, chaperons, visitors. And none are mere ciphers; they have each a physiognomy of their own.

### *The Inner Face*

DOSTOIEVSKY's ambition was to get at the inner face of a man. He was a Don Juan of souls, never sated, always yearning for new and ever new faces.

He did not construct his character according to logical plan, did not make a careful combination of qualities, nor was detailed portrayal his forte. He could not describe and give precise dimensions of the hero's nose and lips in the masterly fashion of Tolstoy and Turgenev. For him as for the Expressionists a man's face was but a signpost to his soul. We never forget Dostoievsky's characters yet we do not know whether their eyes are blue or black. Whether Grushenka or Katerina Ivanovna had fair hair or dark hair, none can tell. On the other hand everyone knows that Turgenev's Liza in "The Nest of Gentle-folk" had black hair and ivory white skin, and the dark down above Princess Volkonska's lips will be remembered by all who have read "War and Peace".

Dostoievsky saw men as Prince Myshkin saw them : the external face being merely like an advertisement of the inner face. Listen to how he presents Ragozhin : " He had almost black, curly hair and small, grey fiery eyes . . . a broad and flat nose, and high cheek bones. His thin lips were continually curved in an insolent, mocking and even malicious smile. But the high and well-shaped forehead redeemed the ignoble lines of the lower part of the face."

Here indeed he does speak of black hair and grey eyes, but the flattened nose, the insolent sneer and the meanly formed lower part of the face are imprinted upon our memory far more deeply. And farther on we are told that what struck the eye most was his deathly pallor which gave his youthful face an intense, tortured expression in strange contrast with his illbred sneer and confident stare.

Or consider the face of Nastasya Filipovna. Prince Myshkin gazes at her photograph : " It's a wonderful face, and I feel sure her story is not an ordinary one. The face is cheerful, but she has passed through terrible suffering, hasn't she ? Her eyes tell one that, the cheek bones, these points under her eyes. It's a proud face, awfully proud, but I don't know whether she is kind hearted. Ah, if she were ! That would redeem it all ! " Neither the colour of the eyes is mentioned, nor the colour of her hair. But is not Nastasya Filipovna fixed in our memory for life ?

To bring the inner face into higher relief Dostoievsky sometimes describes the character's dress, but not

each and every stitch and button in the manner of the Realists. He observes and uses only those parts of a man's dress which reveal some essential characteristic. He does this even in the case of secondary characters. He says of Varvara Ardaleonovna ("The Idiot") that she is twenty-three years old, but dresses exactly like her mother. And from this one sentence the attentive reader realises immediately that this young woman had not the slightest inclination to please men.

Sometimes it is some particular object that Dostoevsky associates with the character for this purpose. When Prince Myshkin appears for the first time, he is sitting in a third class compartment, holding in his hands a little bundle, "his entire luggage". If he can hold his entire luggage in his hands, then plainly his means are not great. We encounter this bundle on seven subsequent occasions. He makes the acquaintance of Ragozhin, who wears a magnificent fur coat, and he looks at the bundle and asks sarcastically: "Is that all your luggage?" Later Myshkin visits General Epanchin, and when the servant sees the wretched bundle he wonders whether he really ought to announce such a visitor. This bundle makes him a ridiculous figure in the eyes of the General's family. When he goes to the Ivolgins to hire a room, the mistress of the house asks: "Have you a trunk?" "No, a bundle. Your brother has gone to fetch it; it's in the passage." And then even for this family he was no longer Prince Myshkin, but

only an idiot. The Ivolgins themselves are in straitened, even indigent circumstances, but such wretchedness surpasses everything, and renders Prince Myskhin ridiculous even in their eyes. And so this little seven times mentioned bundle becomes the touchstone of the character, not only of Prince Myshkin himself, but of all the people whom he has to encounter.

Each character has also his own quite distinct speech, his own vocabulary, his own syntax, which reveal his inner structure.

Stavrogin "pearls his words". He is wonderfully eloquent; on every theme, at all times, no matter whether he is weary or fresh, angry or happy, there flow always from his mouth smooth, rounded, brilliant words like coldly glistening pearls. And his manner of speaking, not so much what he speaks about, testifies to his icy intellectuality, to his soul's frozenness.

Aglaya ("The Idiot") wilful and pampered, yet warm and affectionate, strongly resembles her mother, a fact nowhere explicitly mentioned, but revealed to us by their vocabulary and sentence structure. Compare pages 52 and 431.<sup>1</sup> Aglaya's mother speaks with Prince Myshkin: "I *want* to know how you tell a story. I *want* to be fully convinced and when I see old Princess Belokonsky, I shall tell her all about you. I *want* them all to be interested in you too. Come tell me something. . . . I *want* to know whether you can speak. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> The Novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett. In twelve volumes. Published by Wm. Heinemann.

And Aglaya on page 464: “I *want* to run away from home, and I have chosen you to help me . . . I *want* to be bold, and not to be afraid of anything. I don’t *want* to go to their balls. I *want* to be of use . . . now I have worked it all out, and was waiting for you to ask you all about foreign countries. . . . I *want* to go to Rome. I *want* to visit all the learned societies. I *want* to study in Paris . . . I *want* to make a complete change in my social position . . . I don’t *want* to be a general’s daughter . . . I *want* to run away from home—I *want* to.”—The mother “wants” four times, the daughter says a little more and wants eleven times. Naïve and imperious as they are, they cannot imagine that if they want something, anyone could possibly be unwilling to let them have it.

Dostoievsky reserves for children a characteristic language, plaintive and helpless, and a distinct one for adolescents. How significant is the language of Kola Krasotkin, who intersperses his baby speech with half-understood phrases borrowed from grown-ups! And even if we were not told how old Nyetochka, Nelly or Ilusha are, we could infer their ages with sufficient accuracy from their manner of speech.

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We feel and recognise Dostoievsky’s characters as our fellow men. It cannot be said that we love them all, but we cannot escape from them. They haunt us; we see them in our dreams; and when we go out into the streets, we fear or perhaps long to meet them.

No other writer has bent such loving but at the same time piercing eyes upon man and his destiny.

Dostoievsky has an extraordinary affection for his characters ; understanding gives depth to his love, and love gives warmth to his understanding. Is there any nobler love than the love that knows and understands ?—the love that tears away all the wrappings and trappings, that sees not only all blemishes but likewise all the dark abysses, and yet does not turn away, but accepts and has faith ?

The artist in Dostoievsky has an essentially social outlook. The aim of all his art is to grapple with others' lives, to steal into others' souls. His love is not reserved for the fairest manifestations of spiritual life ; it finds in every living soul, however imperfect, a supreme miracle and a mystery. The soul of man is the highest value round which all other values form their hierarchy. And the worse a soul has been disfigured by adversity and vice, by sorrow and disease, the more love does it need to assist its regeneration.

Almost all Dostoievsky's characters are living ideas. There may be other writers whose books are as crowded with ideas, but there is none whose ideas are so living. Dostoievsky's characters live only to test in practice some philosophical, ethical or religious idea. Raskolnikov tests the theory of superman, Kirilov tests absolute individualism, and the Idiot, Christian love. It was the dream of transforming life by philosophy, of making philosophy and life coincide, that attracted Dostoievsky in his youth to Fourier

and Saint-Simon. Dostoievsky, as one of the greatest of anthropologists and experimental psychologists, lifts man out of his everyday surroundings, strips him of all his wrappings, and places him in an ecstatic, fiery atmosphere, in order to probe and examine there some problem of the soul.

Dostoievsky's characters live an intensified inner life. None of them struggle against society, none of them are shown at work. The only thing that seems out-of-date and incomprehensible to the modern mind in Dostoievsky's eternally fresh writings is how the inhabitants of Dostoievsky's world subsist in idleness.

Raskolnikov, the Idiot, the three brothers Karamazov, all the characters of "The Possessed"—not one of these do we see at work. Poverty is depicted in lurid, Rembrandtesque colours, but the work problem does not exist. Man himself is more important than any work. We feel this very strongly even in Dostoievsky's youthful works. Vanya ("Insulted and Injured") is a talented writer of great promise. How does he spend his days? He takes in the little beggar girl Nelly who has wandered to his door, helps her to look for her father, feels that he is responsible for the punishment of the scoundrel, and cherishes and tends the child's poor sick body and bruised spirit. His betrothed Natasha jilted him to become the mistress of a deceiving prince and her parents disowned and anathematised her. And for days, weeks, months on end, Vanya rushes from the sick Nelly to proud passionate Natasha, from her to her

parents, to Natasha's lover, to his father, in order to remove the poisonous misunderstandings, to ease Natasha's heartburnings, to find good foster parents for Nelly, and to reconcile enmities. And if he had forsaken the humiliated Natasha or Nelly in order to finish the quota of pages he had promised his publishers, he would have been a scoundrel in Dostoievsky's eyes.

And the *Idiot*? He devotes all his strength to easing the relations between Nastasya Filipovna, Ragozhin and Aglaya. He discovers and reveals the true nature of people, helps them to find their inmost selves and heals their spiritual disorders. This is his sole occupation, and this also seems to him more important than any other, since man is more important than anything else. The meaning of life lies in the relationship between man and man and man and God. This is the truth which Alyosha, too, the most affirmatively conceived character in Dostoievsky's maturest novel, knows and bases his life on.

### *The Three Groups*

Dostoievsky's psychology is of tremendous range. Thus it is that he could be the chosen master both of Godseekers like Soloviev, and of worldly individualists like Nietzsche, who compares him to Stendhal, Stendhal who says: "Que m'importe les autres?"

It is difficult to understand how one and the same artist has been able to portray hangman and apostle

with the same vividness, with the same powerful truth.

Interpreters of Dostoevsky commonly assert that Dostoevsky saw every man in an aura of divinity. But that is not altogether correct. Dostoevsky has several sombre characters who cast their shadows upon the brighter ones as an indelible reproach ; how can a man endure it, that another man lives close beside him in such ghastly plight ? "People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty but that is a great injustice and insult to the beasts ; a beast can never be so cruel as man, so artistically cruel." ("The Brothers Karamazov.")

Dostoevsky knew man's sinful passions, his crude cupidity, his spiritual obtuseness and sadism just as deeply as his sublimity of soul and saintly beauty.

His characters may be divided into three groups, varying in size : 1. deep-dyed criminals and sensualists, whose human side is as yet unawakened (but it is not said that there is no possibility of an awakening) ; 2. rebels and strugglers against God, who live in darkness but yearn for light and earnestly seek to find a meaning and justification for life ; 3. glorious apostles of Christianity—Aley in "The House of the Dead", Vanya, Natasha, Sonya, Alyosha, and the elder Zosima, all those who follow Prince Myshkin's banner : humility is true strength.

To the first group, which is not a large one, belong such ulcers on the body of humanity as the eel-like scoundrel and egoist, Prince Valkovsky ("The

Insulted and Injured"). He loved to talk of women, "those luscious morsels", as he ate his supper, and proclaimed with revolting self-complacency: "Everything exists only for my sake, the whole world was created for me alone." And the more furtive, the fouler the outrage, the keener is his delight. He decoys the young poet to the inn at night in order to relate to him the outrages and obscenities he has perpetrated in his long life. He talks to him over his gourmet's supper not to unburden his heart but to vaunt his daring and the impunity he enjoys after all his offences against nature and the law. He speaks without haste, vastly relishing even the mere recollection of all his filthy obscenities. Closely akin to him are the insect Svidrigailov, the valet Smerdiakov, whose very name smells of rottenness, and old Karamazov, drivelling voluptuary, horrible sensualist and buffoon, foulest object on this foul heap. Vice oozes from every pore of his powerfully depicted face: "long fleshy bags under his little, always insolent, suspicious and ironical eyes; besides the multitude of deep wrinkles in his little fat face, the Adam's apple hung below his sharp chin like a great, fleshy goitre, which gave him a peculiar, repulsive, sensual appearance; add to that a long, rapacious mouth with full lips, between which could be seen little stumps of black, decayed teeth." It seems that we can scarcely call the old Karamazov by the name of man; he is simply flesh on which the spirit of God has never breathed. He himself knows no reverence,

nor has he any *inkling* of what this feeling means for others : while his God-fearing, gentle wife is praying before the ikon, he passes by and spits on the holy image. Every woman excites his lust ; none, be she even as loathsome as Elisabeth Smirdosha, is revolting in his eyes. He calls his children pigs, and as soon as they are born, he wonders how he can get rid of them. There seems no answer to the question : wherefore does such a man live ?

To this group belong also some of the inmates of "The House of the Dead" and Foma Fomich in "The Friend of the Family". But we find no women nor any children amid this sombre company.

The second group is the widest and includes the greatest range of shades : there is the cold, despairing libertine Stavrogin, who can find no meaning in the creation, yet cannot live without one, who hangs himself out of self-hatred ; also, Mitya Karamazov, reckless sinner, lacking in all self-restraint, who describes his own character : "Though I am a beast, I am not without nobleness and I am sure that I cannot live as a scoundrel nor die as such" : here too are fretful Katerina Ivanova, burning Aglaya, demoniacal Nastasya Filipovna, the temptress Grushenka, and the Nietzschean fraternity, Hypolit, Raskolnikov, Kirilov, whose slogan is Ivan Karamazov's "All is allowed".

In Dostoievsky's later works the representatives of the first group grow constantly fewer, but that he continued to see men in this triple classification is

proved by the fact that, in his last novel, we find the three-fold gradation complete : the old Karamazov—darkness, Ivan and Mitya—darkness-light, and Alyosha—light.

*The Rebels Against God*

RASKOLNIKOV

“Crime and Punishment” was published in 1866 before the philosophy of Nietzsche had made its public appearance. But Dostoevsky’s individualists are the forerunners of Nietzsche’s superman, and, particularly in “Crime and Punishment”, we hear the ethical motives which, after the appearance of Zarathustra, are generally associated with the name of Nietzsche. This novel is like an artist’s illustration of Nietzsche’s philosophy of the superman : in it we find the morality of master and slave, the will to power and the conviction that a creator immune from sorrow is inconceivable.

Let us compare the concepts of Raskolnikov and Nietzsche, bearing in mind, however, that Raskolnikov is in no sense to be identified with Dostoevsky himself ; he was only a single stage in Dostoevsky’s evolution. The kernel of Nietzsche’s philosophy lies in the following words :

“The superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say : the superman shall be the meaning of the earth !” In other words : the duty of mankind is to form a unique, perfect personality ; millions will

inevitably be destroyed in giving birth to the superman, the individual who in the extent of his development will far outstrip all others, who like a boundary post will show how far mankind can go. "Between man and man there is more difference than between man and beast."

The advance proceeds unchecked over the corpses of the weak and frail. The axiom of Nietzsche's philosophy of history is that mankind will never attain its highest peak of development except by ruthlessness and cruelty.

His doctrine is that there are two sorts of men, masters and slaves. The masters are physically and spiritually stronger, more gifted and distinguished. They rule over the slaves. They determine moral values, always keeping before them the thesis : "I am not a law unto all but only unto mine." The highest virtues of the masters are strength and power. Of the slaves—humility, obedience and endurance. It is not the surpassing wealth or cultural level of a nation that marks the frontier of human development, but a unique personality—for personality is the only thing of value on earth. We find the same ideas already in "Crime and Punishment". The only difference is that Nietzsche expressed his doctrine in dithyrambs, Dostoievsky, in the living likeness of a thinking man. Raskolnikov says : "Men are divided by a law of nature into two categories, inferior (ordinary), that is, so to say, material that serves only to reproduce its kind, and men who have the gift or the talent to utter

*a new word.* . . . The first category live under control and love to be controlled. To my thinking it is their duty to be controlled, because that is their vocation . . . the second category all transgress the law ; they are destroyers or disposed to destruction, according to their capacities. . . . For the most part they seek in very varied ways the destruction of the present for the sake of the better. But if such a one is forced for the sake of his idea to step over a corpse or wade through blood, he can, I maintain, find within himself, in his conscience, a sanction for wading through blood—that depends on the idea and its dimensions, note that. The first category is always the man of the present, the second the man of the future. The first preserve the world and people it, the second move the world and lead it to its goal.”

It is significant that both Raskolnikov and Nietzsche admire Napoleon as a titanic personality. Raskolnikov usually mentions Napoleon as the instance of the fearless ruler, and Nietzsche says : “ Napoleon is the final incarnation of God and the sun ” ; Napoleon was for him the synthesis of superman and fiend.

It is possible to express Raskolnikov’s theory almost completely in quotations from Nietzsche. If we take a few aphorisms severed from their context, it is often difficult to say whether they are the words of Dostoevsky or Nietzsche : “ An event, an action in itself is absolutely valueless. The only thing that matters is what causes the action to take place. On different occasions the same crime may be a great credit or an

eternal disgrace." Does this not seem to be the language of Raskolnikov? And yet it is Nietzsche. Or again: "What is happiness? It is the knowledge that our power is increasing." ("Transvaluation of Values.") Does not this thesis remind us of the words of Raskolnikov?: "Freedom and power but above all—power! Power over all trembling creatures, over all this antheap." And Zarathustra concludes with these powerful chords of a hymn to power: "Passion for power: the earthquake that destroys and crushes everything that is rotten and empty-cored; the rolling, tumbling, punitive demolisher."

For Dostoevsky as for Nietzsche, the strength that lifts the individual to the peak of creation is suffering. The depth of our vital feeling depends on the measure of our sorrow. Dostoevsky is well known as an extoller of suffering, but Nietzsche is too often spoken of as the deifier of the flesh, and it is forgotten that he also worshipped suffering and that one of his profoundest utterances is: "Great sorrow alone is the ultimate deliverer of the soul." Dostoevsky and Nietzsche are the greatest prophets of the late nineteenth century, and Nietzsche knew well that all prophets are sufferers: "Ihr habt kein Gefühl dafür, dass prophetische Menschen sehr leidende Menschen sind." Nietzsche wished his best friends loneliness, sickness, humiliation, pain—only in a man's suffering do we see whether there is hidden worth in him. "To be a creator you must endure suffering and much transformation. Yes,

many bitter deaths must take place in your souls, you creators." Thus spake Zarathustra. And Raskolnikov-Dostoievsky : " Pain and suffering are inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart. The really great men must have great sadness on earth."

Raskolnikov and Nietzsche impose heavy demands upon the creative man. The future man of Raskolnikov and the superman of Nietzsche, though hard-hearted and unsympathetic towards the masses, though setting their own personality high above everything, are neither epicureans nor egoists. In this respect Nietzsche has been greatly misunderstood : in their fanatical enthusiasm for the superman, Nietzsche's dilettante followers have turned out brutal egoists. Nietzsche's exclamation " Hateful to me is the warped mind that seeks only its own pleasure ", is seldom quoted and still more seldom understood.

When Nietzsche protested against the ethics of his day it was not to proclaim lawlessness but a new law. Zarathustra asks those who are prepared to follow the new path : " Wouldst thou go the way of thine affliction, which is the 'way unto thyself? Then show me thine authority and thy strength to do so ! " Zarathustra knows well that " many a one has cast away his final worth when he has cast away his servitude." The future man will have to know how to control himself, will have to be victor and lord over himself, master of his feelings, his desires, his instincts. Zarathustra strives towards absolute individual liberty

but this liberty is a painful, however glorious, duty.

Raskolnikov himself wishes to write the commandments of life, to be the supreme judge and avenger. But is it granted him to embody his idea in life?

His inordinate pride suffers acutely in his dingy little garret; and all of us know how "low ceilings and narrow rooms oppress the mind and soul". He is afflicted, too, by the penury of his mother and sister. But all these circumstances are not the decisive cause of his crime. Raskolnikov killed the old female usurer because his whole being was filled with one burning question: would he be able to exalt his will over himself like a commandment, was he truly a prime agent, a self-rolling wheel; he wished to put it to the test, to find out for certain whether "he was a man, or a louse like all the others?" "He alone wins power who dares to stoop and take it up," says Raskolnikov, and "I had to convince myself as soon as possible . . . whether I could transgress or not? Am I only a trembling creature or have I the right?" In long, sleepless nights he pondered countless times, with the strange passionateness peculiar to Dostoevsky's heroes, over the thoughts that mastered him; on the one hand a hideous, quite worthless, even wicked old female usurer; on the other—young, budding strength, dreams of wondrous beauty which must all come to nought in dreadful poverty. If he put an end to this scarcely living sponge of money, shook off once for all the intolerable yoke of poverty

by means of her wealth, and steadied his first steps after he had finished his university career—could he then by a thousand good altruistic deeds and works balance this . . . transgression? It seemed simply a problem of arithmetic.

Raskolnikov murdered the old woman, but he did not surmount the insurmountable: “Why so soft, so submissive and yielding? . . . And if your hardness will not glance and cut and chip to pieces, how can ye one day—create with me? For the creators are hard. . . . Entirely hard is only the noblest. This new table, O my brethren, put I up over you: Become hard!”—Thus spake Zarathustra. Raskolnikov did not possess this inflexible will, this hardness. “There is no romanticism in the great soul,” asserts Nietzsche, but in Raskolnikov’s gentle soul there is so much romanticism. He loves “to hear singing to a street organ . . . on cold, dark, damp autumn evenings when all the passers-by have pale green, sickly faces, or better still when the snow is falling straight down, when there is no wind”. The poetry of his soul is revealed in his relations to his mother, to his sister and, above all, to the children, whom he caresses and kisses with feminine tenderness. In his sensitive soul dwells deep compassion for the weak, as is shown by his dream about the tortured horse. His beloved was a poor, delicate girl, devoid of beauty, and Raskolnikov says: “Had she even been lame or hunch-backed I should have loved her all the more.” And yet—he does not repent of his crime. On his way to the police

station to make his confession, he feels no pangs of conscience, but only "horror and loneliness".

At the cross-roads Raskolnikov kneels down and kisses the earth simply because the time of gloom and tormenting sorrows is ending, because he longs impatiently for a new and powerful inner experience. He feels that the trembling creature has prevailed over the daring master and thence springs this despair. He feels that remorse is weakness: "I didn't succeed and therefore I had no right to have taken that step." He does not suffer because he has murdered the old woman, but because he falsely estimated his own strength; he should have known beforehand whether he could transgress or not. "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the superman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous trembling and halting." The abyss which Raskolnikov would have crossed was too fearsome. He looked back, halted and toppled to his ruin.

At the end of the epilogue Dostoievsky shows us a calm, smiling Raskolnikov with the Gospel in his hand; through his great suffering he has attained sublime harmony. Yet Merezhkovsky is right in saying that, at the end of the novel, Raskolnikov is no longer a living man, but a hollow counterfeit. We cannot believe in the regeneration of Raskolnikov, there is too little light, too little vitality in him. Had Dostoievsky himself believed in this regeneration, he would have depicted it more convincingly. No,

Raskolnikov does not find a new life, he goes under. But does not Zarathustra say of such men : " Better despair than surrender. And verily I love you, you higher men, because you know not to-day how to live ! For thus do you live best." ?

### *Hypolit*

Another of Dostoievsky's proclaimers of and victims of selfwill is Hypolit (" The Idiot "), a pathetic figure in his youthful thirst for life. In him, too, burn Promethean longings ; he, too, would shape his own destiny. His mother, a poor widow with carefully powdered face, has a numerous family, and he himself, though gifted and able, is consumptive. He considers his disease and the plight of his family as a personal insult. He knows that he must die, but every cell of his being longs for life. He boils with indignation against the silent, incomprehensible fate that crushes him like a fly : he feels " nothing but anger ". And when the visitors, assembled with Prince Myshkin, are drinking champagne he asks them all the question : Why have I begun to live at all, when I am not able to live ? It is in fact the motif of the Book of Job : " Wherefore is light given to him in misery and life unto the bitter in soul ? "

During the night he has a terrifying dream : a great, slimy reptile, half-lizard, half-salamander, tries to swallow him up. A being with a candle in his hand leads him into a great, dark room, and showing him

the monster, assures him that this silent, slimy reptile is the Almighty, the lord of human life. Hypolit has to spend whole days in bed, and he sees from his bedroom window only Meyer's wall—the silent, fiendish wall, which stole away all brightness from him, the youth who was yearning for the sun, and which would go on standing there and stealing the light when he himself had long passed out of existence. And Hypolit, tortured by nightmares and the terror of death, writes out his confession and reads it to the visitors who are nearly all drunk. He is compelled to speak out, for his young soul, in its longing for life, can bear its loneliness no longer. He decides that he cannot go on with life, which has come to him in such a strange insulting form. Life has always kept its foot upon his breast, has crushed him down to earth, but for once, for just one single time, he longs to do as he himself wills, not as the fell monster imposes. Like all proud individualists, this youth of eighteen thinks that every selfwilled action exalts, and every submission humiliates. To comfort him a little, Prince Myshkin takes him to a villa where there is no Meyer's wall, where there are trees and light, but he feels insulted and says: "What use to me is your nature, your park, your sunrises and your sunsets, your blue sky, and your contented faces, when all this endless festival has begun by my being excluded from it? What is there for me in this beauty when, every minute, every second I am obliged, forced to recognise that even the tiny fly buzzing in the sunlight

beside me has its share in the banquet and the chorus, knows its place, loves it and is happy ; and I alone am an outcast, and only my cowardice has made me refuse to realise it till now ? ”

Had someone shown him his predestined life, while he was yet unborn, he would have resigned his claim to it. Had it depended on him, he would never have accepted life in such a guise. And so if he cannot live in accordance with his own wishes, he will at least die in accordance with them. He will spurn the miserable two weeks that are granted him and will commit suicide. In leaving life he will no longer suffer before its tribunal, and at least once in his life will have his own way.

Having read his confession, which nobody except Prince Myshkin understands or even listens to, he goes out at dawn on to the steps of the terrace and fires a revolver into his head ; but it turns out to be empty : he has forgotten to load it. Now his despair is even more bitter, and Prince Myshkin alone is able to soothe him. And he asks Myshkin what he is to do now ? He would like to do something great, and useful and good ; he does not want to be a fly at this universal banquet. The prince has just then become betrothed to Aglaya, a vista of happiness has been opened up to him, and he asks of Hypolit the hardest thing of all—impossible for such youths as Hypolit, possible only for those who have freed themselves from the prison of “ Self ” : “ Pass by, and forgive us our happiness.”

Hypolit wished to claim the right, later upheld by Nietzsche, of voluntary death: "For some people life has nothing to offer: a poisonous worm gnaws at their heart. Such must endeavour to die well. There are fruits that never grow to sweetness; they begin to rot in midsummer. It is only cowardice that holds them to the branch."

Hypolit's protest against life is the one-sided rebellion of a youth; the youth of the hero strikes a note of impotent and unbearable sadness. Kirilov dauntlessly carries this same rebellion to its logical end with iron resolution. Kirilov completes what Hypolit begins; what Hypolit only contemplates, he achieves. "I bequeath you my death, a free death, which comes to me because I desire it"—thus spake Zarathustra, and thus died Kirilov, Dostoievsky's most terrible rebel against God.

### *Kirilov*

Kirilov bears out the view of Plotinus that the most sublime bliss is the bliss of contemplation. He feasts magnificently on his thoughts. The darkness of "The Possessed" is extreme, yet in this hellish chaos and furious maelstrom of passions, the figure of Kirilov shines with sovereign power. An atmosphere of lofty grandeur surrounds this aristocrat of the intellect, this splendid, awe-inspiring individualist of whom even the hardened criminal speaks with reverence. No hint of impurity taints Kirilov's chastity, and his isolation even deepens it. The chastity of Sonya,

Alyosha and the Idiot springs from their meekness of spirit, but Kirilov's is the result of a strong, self-sufficient intellectuality.

Kirilov's character is compounded of but a few qualities ; it is sketched in a few bold, widely separated but extremely effective lines. In the whole of the long, dark, turbulent novel we encounter him only some five times, but he always appears like pure thought proclaiming its autonomous freedom. His childlike innocence is a strange but fundamental concomitant of his loftiness of mind. When he smiles, which is very seldom, an inexpressibly charming, childlike and sunny expression lights up his pale, ascetic face. Rigorous purity reigns not only in his thoughts, but in his whole external being. He considers his theory of man-god as the supreme principle, as the revelation which will transform the whole world, but there is no trace of self-conceit or arrogance in him. When a visitor soils the floor of his room with his wet shoes one rainy day, Kirilov graciously puts him at his ease : " You are dirty, but never mind, I shall wipe the floor afterwards myself with a wet cloth."

The idea of man-god absorbs him, yet he has none of the aloofness usually associated with the theoretician. His warm fellow-feeling prompts him to prepare a supper for famishing Fedka, who has escaped from prison. He plays lovingly with his landlady's little daughter, comforts her and looks for her ball, which has rolled under a cupboard, as earnestly as if he had lost an idea there.

His position in society is strangely isolated: he seems to have no ancestors nor kinsfolk, and men interest him but little; yet he intuitively perceives their worth or hollowness. He does not notice the meanness of his poorly furnished rooms, he feels only the wealth of his inner world. Like all stern individualists, he has no time for his environment, for social life. Whole days and nights Kirilov sits on his old, worn sofa, drinking tea, meditating unremittingly upon the man-god, the very man-god whom Nietzsche much later called the superman. He must bring his thought to its final lucid form, and thus far he is a typical theoretician; but he himself must fulfil this idea in life, and that marks him as a typical character of Dostoievsky. If someone comes to pay him a visit, he receives him kindly, gladly regales him with tea, yet he is not sorry when his guest departs: he has no time to think about people. He cannot even converse properly—his idea is so great, so new and so remarkable that he cannot embody it clearly in words. He is rebuked for having forgotten the Russian language during his stay abroad. And Kirilov is surprised: "Is it incorrect? I don't know. No, not because I was abroad. I have spoken thus all my life, it is all the same to me." This is quite characteristic: the outer form is all the same to him. He does not want to impress anyone with his ideas, he wishes to convince himself alone and no one else. Shame-facedly he shelters his idea, his supreme treasure, from prying eyes. He is embarrassed when a stranger

casually touches upon this subject, and asks out of curiosity for some explanation. But once he begins to speak he can check himself no longer, but storms on, no matter whether it is the glassy intellectualist Stavrogin who listens or the hollow scoundrel Verchovensky. He does not speak to convince others, but simply because his thought seizes him and sweeps him off. He hates mere words and phrases : "I hate talking . . . I can't endure disputes." There is no hint of rhetoric in his three dialogues, but there is persuasive power. Those who have read them once will read them again and again, and each time with fresh admiration for this refined Russian forerunner of Nietzsche who first introduced the idea of superman into literature.

"Everybody thinks of one thing and then immediately of another but I cannot think of another, but all my life of one," confesses Kirilov in his peculiar language. Kirilov in his isolation was as much tormented by God as Mitya was in his stormy life. He longs to find not only the cause of his suffering, but a way out and a deliverance from it. He is an atheist, but his atheism is only polarised faith ; all his being cries out for God, as Nietzsche in his poem :

"Du Jäger hinter Wolken !  
Grausamster Jäger,  
Du—unbekannter Gott.  
Nein, komm zurück  
Mit allen Deinen Martern  
O, komm zurück,  
Mein unbekannter Gott ! Mein Schmerz !  
Mein letztes Glück !"

Kirilov's God is the unimpeded, who will allow nothing to impede the universe. It is an unfeeling, unemotional, undivided God. "There will be no God, or an angry, or a proud. For whom it will be necessary to do violence to life, he will be the new man. Then all will be easier; pain and terror will himself be dead. And the God will not be . . . Then there will be no more life, a new man, everything will be new.

Man will be God, and will be transformed physically, and the world will be transformed and things will be transformed and thoughts and all feelings."

We are unhappy because we are not free, and because we are afraid. We may know what is right, what we ought to do, but we lack the courage, the inner need, to practise it in life. Fear is the curse of man; the divinity knows no fear, therefore it is free and happy; for there is no higher happiness than freedom; that is Kirilov's creed.

Kirilov has freed himself from all outer forms, from all external laws; he has won inward illumination through great suffering, and can say serenely: "Yes, I am very happy." He loves everything; little children, the yellow leaf and even the spider which hangs its cobweb in his room. "I pray to everything," he says to Stavrogin. "You see the spider crawling on the wall, I look at it and thank it for crawling." Man is unhappy simply because he does not know that he is happy. And he is bad only because he does not know that he is good, so runs Kirilov's thought. . . . "But is he who outrages a little girl also good?"

Stavrogin asks sharply. "Had he known that he was good he would not have outraged her," answers Kirilov.

Let us follow Kirilov's thought further: "If there is God, then all will is His, and I cannot get beyond it. If there is not, all will is mine and it is my duty to proclaim self-will, and the highest act of self-will is suicide. Everyone who wishes absolute freedom must have the courage to destroy himself." Many people commit suicide, but they have always some egoistic reason for doing so: perhaps great sorrow, or weariness of life, or despair, or frenzy; and in such cases there is no proclamation of freedom. "Absolute freedom will exist when it no longer concerns us whether we live or not. When nothing will fetter man any more. . . . If there is no God, I am God," concludes Kirilov. And it is remarkable that Nietzsche expresses exactly the same thought, only in inverted form: "If God exists, how can it be that I myself am not God?" Is there in truth no God? This question, which has tormented Kirilov all his life, flares up with fearful intensity in his last night. "God is indispensable, therefore He must be," and "But I know there is no God and cannot be." And how does Kirilov know it? "There was a day on earth, and in the midst of the earth there stood three crosses. One on the Cross had such faith that he said to another, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise'. The day ended; both died and passed away and found neither Paradise nor resurrection.

. . . That Man was the loftiest of all on earth. . . . The whole planet with everything on it, is mere madness without that Man. . . . If the laws of nature did not spare even Him, have not spared even their miracle and made Him even live in a lie and die for a lie, then the very laws of the planet are a lie and the vaudeville of devils. And all this humbug because we had faith in this God who has never existed. Man must know that he is the only lord over life."

Kirilov strives all his life to get beyond mere words : he lives only in order to prove his thoughts and therefore there is but one way left to him, to proclaim his freedom and commit suicide. "I am bound to shoot myself because the highest point of my self-will is to kill myself with my own hands." Kirilov's whole life is an ecstatic hymn to self-willed freedom, of which Zarathustra said : "Terrible is aloneness with the judge and avenger of one's own laws. Thus is a star cast into desert space, and into the icy breath of aloneness."

The solipsist Kirilov does not realise that true freedom does not mean that I may do anything that occurs to me, that true freedom is an ethico-religious concept in which the individual, ephemeral "I" dissolves away. Kirilov, like the other rebels of Dostoievsky, is unaware that self-will mars personality, for the premise of personality is to bow down before what is higher.

*The Apostles of Christ*

## THE IDIOT

If we imagine Dostoievsky's characters climbing a vast staircase which leads to light, then on the lowest step stands the Tatar Gazin and on the highest—the Idiot, Alyosha and the elder Zosima.

If we would understand the Idiot properly, we must bear in mind that he is the character in which Dostoievsky's real self is hallowed by his ideal self. The Idiot expresses Dostoievsky's most intimate thoughts on capital punishment, he gives utterance to Dostoievsky's glorification of life which nothing could silence: "Even in prison one can attain a noble life." The Idiot possesses the quality which Dostoievsky loved most in the Russian people: the power of stealing into other minds, of grasping their hidden natures. (The Idiot's flair for reproducing the handwriting of different periods and people is a good illustration of this quality.) Like Dostoievsky, the Idiot cannot tear himself from Holbein's Christ, like Dostoievsky the Idiot is an epileptic. We learn from Dostoievsky's biography that he spent four years abroad and that he never saw Russia and the Russian people so clearly as during his absence: the rough drafts of "The Idiot", "The Possessed" and "The Brothers Karamazov" were made abroad. The Idiot, too, has been four years abroad, and on his return he sees the Russians as they are with uncommon clarity.

If we read "The Idiot" attentively we begin to glimpse not only the face of Dostoevsky himself, but also another distant figure, all the more wonderful in that he is nowhere directly mentioned, but whose soft radiance, glimmering across the centuries, is reflected in Prince Myshkin's every word and deed. When the Idiot says in his quiet, soothing tone that people often bore him, but that he loves children, they are his best friends, we hear in the distance the well known voice of old : "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." When he, who is chaste and shy, who has touched no woman, who even blushes when asked if he is married, kisses the sinful Maria, when to Nastasya Filipovna who calls herself a daughter of the streets, he says : "I love you, Nastasya Filipovna, I love you. I'd die for you, Nastasya Filipovna. I won't let anyone say a word about you, Nastasya Filipovna," then in these scenes appears the radiance of a scene of long ago : "Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much."

He who is sexually indifferent, chaste, casts a strange spell upon women. Women follow him, they serve him; they are ready to die for him as their master. And is it not written of the Galilean that there followed Him Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Susannah "and many others which ministered unto Him of their substance"?

When the Idiot returns to his native land after four

years' absence with his little ridiculous bundle, and homeless and friendless does not know where to stay, where to go from the station, we cannot help remembering the words: "Foxes have holes . . . but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The touch of a magic truth destroys the prophets' distinction between thought and life. That is why they are so strangely isolated from all around them, so tragically alone. Surely Christ must have suffered greater anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane than on the Cross, when, feeling a dreadful loneliness and uncertainty, He turned to His disciples—it was not a crowd that followed Him, only the chosen twelve—and saw that they were asleep? Prince Myshkin returns from abroad, weary after his journey, and immediately he is involved in family quarrels at the Epanchins' house. These quarrels grow even worse in Ivolgin's family, and the trouble reaches its climax that same night at Nastasya Filipovna's. On this first day he has to meet fourteen people; they each of them think only of themselves, unburden their hearts to him, and none of them—intelligent or stupid—ask him how he himself is, how he feels! And even more painful, perhaps: after a severe epileptic fit he is lying on his veranda when there come to visit him a mob of nihilists and revolutionaries, and, at the same time, the refined family of Epanchins; on the one hand, the highest stratum of society, the pillars of conservatism, on the other, fanatical youth which knows only how to overturn and trample down and

shout and get drunk. The Prince is alone in this ill-assorted company, remote and lonely among them. They forget about his illness, nobody sees his weariness. He speaks to everyone, but of his own weakness he says not a word.

He bears the unbearable with a smile. . . . "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." He answers the most shameless questions humbly and frankly. When Aglaya, before the whole family, asks him defiantly: "Now, tell me plainly, do you intend to marry me or not?" he answers simply: "Yes." And when, to make him look ridiculous, she asks rudely how much capital he has, Prince Myshkin tells her naïvely. He does not understand that there are some things which one may speak about, and others about which one may not, and so she calls him openly a sheep. He truly loves his neighbour as himself, and that is why people call him the Idiot. The boorish Ragozhin says to him with a surprise which contains both mockery and awe: "You are a regular blessed innocent, and God loves people such as you." And in the Book of Books we read: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Myshkin is one of them.

A brother attacks his sister, he is about to strike her, but Myshkin, though he has never seen those people before, defends the woman. The enraged brother hits the Prince, who buries his face in his hands, hides in a distant corner of the room, and says in a distressed voice: "Oh, later you will feel

so uncomfortable and ashamed of your behaviour." The people around them stop and conclude that he is an idiot.

He has a wonderful power of intuition. He divines Nastasya Filipovna's character and destiny by looking at the portrait of this woman whom he had never seen. When asked whether Ragozhin will marry Nastasya Filipovna or not, he answers prophetically: "Marry her! he might to-morrow, I dare say he'd marry her and in a week perhaps murder her." He has an instinct for character; with honest folk he feels immediately at home, but worldly people repel him instinctively.

About this delicate, fair-haired young man with his thin little beard and the heavy, slow look in his blue eyes there is a halo, unseen but ever felt. He awakens the noblest sentiments in men. If a man is wicked and base, he speaks with him just as if he were good. The wealthy Nastasya Filipovna goes arrogantly to her betrothed's humble home, ridicules everyone, encourages the old doting father to build a whole edifice of lies in order to laugh at him and thus humiliate the whole family. Prince Myshkin listens, listens as if he did not understand, then suddenly he says in his quiet, humble voice: "Aren't you ashamed? Are you really such a person as you try to appear now? It cannot be." And Nastasya Filipovna smiles contemptuously, but then gets up quickly, kisses the hand of her betrothed's mother and hurriedly departs.

In the end they all turn their backs on Prince Myshkin. They leave him alone in his sickness and loneliness, he who was so irreproachably chaste, so unselfishly good. Why? Because he has different thoughts and leads a different life from them all—“ My Kingdom is not of this world ” . . .

The reading of this book is sweet and bitter at the same time.

The Idiot is as close to us as a brother. His loving gaze follows us and comforts us long after we have closed the book ; his humble, questioning voice echoes in our ears when we return to the fray of life. His light attends us like a friendly torch in the darkness of the way. But his presence, although it comforts us, too, fills us with inexpressible sadness ; if a new Galilean arose, if an ideally pure man came to live among us, we would crucify Him again.

### *Alyosha*

It would be wrong to suppose that Prince Myshkin’s chastity is explained by his illness.

Dostoievsky seems to wish to refute the idea that only the sick and the poor in spirit can be chaste, when in his last novel he portrays the weak, delicate girl Lise, as a little witch, but the pure-hearted monk Alyosha as a strong, broad-shouldered, ruddy-cheeked youth, with pride in his physical well-being.

Alyosha, Dostoievsky’s brightest character, is a monk ; it was not asceticism that attracted him to

Seraphicus, and Mitya, burning in the inferno of his passions—the Cherub. Both brothers, like all others, trust him as implicitly as their own consciences.

He himself speaks little, and to long monologues he generally replies with a quiet remark, but this remark is long cherished in the memory as a priceless treasure. He never blames people, never judges them, but he does not allow them to follow the smooth, well-trodden path of convenience.

This self-sacrificing apostle of active love is in demand everywhere. “Oh, how we need you!” are the words that usually greet his appearance. People can tell him things which they could never reveal to anyone else; he understands what no one else can. They can speak to him without embarrassment or shame. Nothing human is alien to him, nothing can surprise him; chaste and calm in soul, in deep harmony with himself, with life and with eternity, he bows down to men and listens to them, listens to all alike: to the hysterical young Lise, to Grushenka, queen of profligacy, to proud Katerina Ivanovna and to the fool Snegirov. He listens to them and understands them. And it is not merely an intelligent understanding which is a cold comfort and sometimes positively offensive, but a loving comprehension which warms the heart and helps to bear the burden.

Hence every sufferer opens his heart to him, as to the Idiot; and soon sunlit islets begin to show in the sea of despondency. In crude Grushenka, that languorous animal who was preparing to devour him

as a rare morsel, he reveals human features, and awakens longings for redemption. She will never forget how Alyosha, her "bright young moon" on to whose lap she jumped like a sleek, purring cat, gently caressed her and called her sister. He elicits on men's faces the bright smiles which lie hidden beneath a stratum of fretfulness, bitterness and shyness ; he helps them to prepare for the hardest of all struggles—the struggle with "Self" ; he inspires them with the faith that they, even the most wicked and the most broken of them, can be good. He does not preach to them, for tormented souls do not want sermons ; he merely listens to them with understanding love. And is not this the supreme beneficence and saving grace ?

Alyosha does not live for an idea, but in faith, and that is why he is Dostoievsky's happiest character. God and truth are revealed to him not in visionary mysticism, but in the presence of men. His relations to men are not theoretical, but intimate, loving and fervid.

Dostoievsky's critics have hinted that Alyosha, his most affirmative character, is not a living man : such inward harmony, such chastity, such flawlessness cannot exist in life.

We are accustomed to measure all men with the same rod, and to call "unreal" or abnormal such as this rod does not fit. But the single word man covers a diversity to which nothing else in the world can show a parallel.

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There is a seventh day among men, there are men whose existence alone renews our faith in humanity. Alyosha is neither a law nor a type, but an exception, a Sunday, a landmark which shows how far humanity can go on the path of inner purification.

But let us not forget that he, too, is a Karamazov, that he, too, belongs to the same family which Mitya compares to fierce, lustful insects. He is not merely an ideal, he is also a man, who has times of doubt and weariness ; but he buries them deep within himself showing the world only his brightness and smiles. When Mitya describes to him the violence of his lust, Alyosha blushes, not at his brother's obscene words, but because he feels with dread that he, too, has the same dark potentialities.

When the elder Zosima, whom Alyosha revered as a saint, who had been father and friend to him, dies, and his corpse begins to decompose unusually quickly, Alyosha is in despair ; it seems to him that the laws of nature are overthrowing the supremacy of spirit, that there is only matter, and no immortality. And with the shallow unbeliever Rakitin he eats meat, drinks vodka and pays a visit to dissolute Grushenka. It is just this night of doubt that brings Alyosha so near to us, that transforms him from a flawless statue into a warm fellowman.

He, too, is tempted by the devil, even though only in his dreams ; but the dream is a product of the subconscious, and who knows whether these subconscious processes may not one day break forth ?

We see Alyosha only in the first period of his life, when he is twenty years old. Dostoievsky had intended to add a second part to "The Brothers Karamazov" to show the conclusion of the three brothers' and especially Alyosha's career. He who understands the uncompromising spirit of Alyosha, and knows the heavy service on the field of life, foresees that the life of Alyosha would not be stormless, but feels that such as he maintain undimmed their lamp of brightness.

### *Children*

"Children are mysterious creatures, they haunt us in our dreams."

In Dostoievsky's cosmos, rotating betwixt light and darkness, children occupy an important place. This is characteristic, not only of Dostoievsky, but of Russian literature in general. French literature, with its typical bias for the mature and polished, does not pay particular attention to the psychology of children. In the novels of Balzac, children are merely stumbling blocks for their parents' intrigues, in the novels of Zola they are innocent creatures who must suffer for the sins of their parents. But in the novels of Dostoievsky children are assigned a quite independent place.

Dostoievsky had an extraordinary love for children. Through the mouth of Ivan Karamazov he says: "All children deserve love, even the bad and the ugly ones. But to me children are never ugly." When

Dostoievsky was haled away to penal servitude, when manacles were put on him, when he was taking leave of his brother, he remained calm, but when he passed by the house where his friend's children were gathered round their Christmas tree, he could no longer restrain his tears. In his letters to his brother he never failed to ask how the children were. During his travels abroad with Suslova when he was assailed by passion for her and for gambling, the innocent, wondering eyes of some unknown child could reclaim him from the vertigo of his senses. He was a fond father and he loved to stroke the smooth, soft hair of his beloved children.

He has whole tales devoted to the psychology of children ("Nyetochka Nyezvanov", "A Little Hero", "The Heavenly Christmas Tree"), and novels in which a child or a youth is the chief or one of the chief characters ("The Insulted and Injured", "A Raw Youth"). The psychology and the lot of children interested him from his earlier until his latest years. In "The Brothers Karamazov" he devotes seven chapters to child-nature, which grown-up people mostly fail to understand. In "An Author's Diary" he often deals with problems relating to the position of children in society; he writes about reformatories, young delinquents and child beggars. To show that a character is a man of fine fibre he tells how kind he is to children; all the sympathetic characters of Dostoievsky love children, no matter whether it is the proud Raskolnikov, the theoretician Kirilov, the cold intellectualist Ivan, or the angelically

gentle Alyosha and Myshkin. Only the depraved, such as old Karamazov, hate children. The more affirmatively conceived a character is, the kinder he is to children. On the stair that leads up to the light, Myshkin, Alyosha and Zosima have ascended highest and they, too, are the best friends of children.

All Dostoievsky's children are city children; pale, nervous and highly-strung, they look out on the world with reproachful eyes. Bitterness has already set its mark on the line of their mouths. There are no country children such as we meet with in our Latvian literature, they do not grow up among animals and plants; their eyes do not reflect the calmness of forest pools; their souls never wander free with the white clouds. Little Nyetochka Nyezvanov cries hysterically on almost every page, beautiful Nelly suffers from epilepsy, and she understands precociously why she is decked out in ribbons and new shoes.

Dostoievsky portrayed with particular vividness the psychology of puberty at a time when this branch of psychology was still quite neglected. Everybody looks upon Nyetochka as a girl, but the woman in her has already awakened, and down in her heart she suffers, because she cannot be grateful to her benefactor as a child, because she loves him as a woman. Nelly's experience is the same, but aggravated by fits of jealousy. And rich, spoiled Lise confesses her love, first to Alyosha, then to Ivan, in order to convince herself, that she, too, though crippled, is a woman. Dostoievsky saw that adolescent love

is oftenest based on aesthetic admiration. Nyetochka loves little Katya because she is so beautiful, because her shoulders are so white.

The child's first contact with life is a painful experience. When Ilusha feels life's unprovoked, unpunished injustice for the first time he wants to run away. He implores his father tearfully : "Let us go away, let us go far away from this wicked town." Only from the town ? No, from life that is too unjust, and against whose overwhelming force little Ilusha cannot struggle. To run far away from pain and tears is Nyetochka's longing, too, but she cannot yet express her thoughts, does not even know the true cause of her sadness. She only repeats, let us go away from this room, from this house, from this town.

The children of Dostoievsky are all precocious town children, but they have each a distinct individuality ; each of them has already well-defined personality. We feel that little Lise will grow up into a passionate woman, capable of sacrificing herself but also of hating bitterly. And Kola Krasotkin, the lad with great ambitions, who already is an independent thinker, will grow up to be a rebel. His opposite is the shy Kartashov, who blushes to the tips of his ears whenever he speaks. But Dostoievsky seems to love best of all proud, frail Ilusha, who burns to avenge the insult done to his father.

It is peculiar that in the world of Dostoievsky those who love and caress children are men and not women, as would be more natural. The little beggar girl

Nelly is put to bed, fed, cherished and maintained by the writer Vanya. And there is something extraordinarily touching and true in this friendship between the starving writer and the black-eyed beggar girl whose soul is full of hatred. Alyosha understands children with an even more sympathetic insight than Vanya's. Katerina Ivanovna sends money to relieve little Ilusha's poverty, but Alyosha is the one who sits beside the boy's bed, and helps him to bear the pain.

Those who have the strongest hold upon children, who influence them most and suffer most deeply with them in their sorrows, are not always their parents, no, they are sometimes complete strangers, bright, kindly hearts who are not wrapped up in their own lives. For Dostoievsky the workings of nature had no interest. Nature itself, as we have already shown, does not enter into his novels, and he deals only casually with the most natural kind of love; the love of parents for their children, love as an instinct for the perpetuation of the race. It seemed to him that the love of parents for their children is often too egoistic. In "The Brothers Karamazov" we read:

"Love for a father when he does not deserve it, is absurd and impossible. We cannot create love out of nothing. God alone can do that." The cruel lot of the children of "fortuitous" families moved him deeply. He can understand the youth who, when he thinks of his father, asks in the bitterness of his heart: "Was it for my sake that he gave me life? He had no thought for me, nor my sex at the moment of

begetting, that moment of lust when he perhaps was drunk" ("The Brothers Karamazov").

On the question of responsibility before the birth of the child, Dostoievsky's views are akin to Nietzsche's, who asks: "You are young and long for children and marriage. But I ask you: have you the right to wish for children? Are you a victor, commander of your flesh and spirit, lord of your virtue? . . . Or is it the beast and necessity that speaks in your desire?"

This animal instinct, which occupies so important a place in the novels of Tolstoy, was not one of the problems that obsessed Dostoievsky, but pure spiritual love for children is one of his favourite themes. Our protecting hands must shelter the tender buds from the frost of life, even though we have no hope of seeing the blossoms, and though the fruit is destined to fall into the lap of others. The full-grown must assist the immature to attain their full stature. It is a pleasant sight to see a tender shoot clinging for support to a more deeply rooted stem.

Alyosha's own father is more of a stranger to him than any stranger. His spiritual father is the elder Zosima; he follows in the footsteps of this white-haired man, surrenders his still timorous soul into his kind old hands, and lets him train its growth; and he himself in his turn tends and guards those who are even more immature and weak; Kola Krasotkin, Smurov, Ilusha and Lise.

The bond of the spirit is stronger than the bond of flesh.

## CHAPTER IV

### LOVE

#### *His Attitude Towards Women*

DOSTOIEVSKY was in close touch with the feminist movement which was then in its earliest stages : with courageous, but still inexperienced hands, woman was opening the door of the home to pass out into the world. It was then the intoxicating spring of the great struggle in which women sought to end their long, ice-bound winter.

All Dostoievsky's women friends took part in the struggle for feminine emancipation. Suslova opened her school, Anna Vasilievna became a well-known revolutionary in France, Anna Grigorievna took courses in stenography, that she might shape her own life unhampered by any material dependence, and Sonya Kovalevska, the celebrated mathematician, tells in her memoirs how the friendship of Dostoievsky gave her faith in her own powers and in her chosen vocation.

Dostoievsky strongly advocated feminine emancipation. In this respect he did not follow in the steps of his master Balzac, who said : "Emancipating woman means making her unhappy . . . woman's only duty is to make man's heart throb."

Dostoievsky rejected Balzac's opinion and, as we saw, applauded George Sand, not indeed the George Sand who in men's clothes and hob-nailed boots was running about the streets of Paris with a cigar in her mouth, and who left her children in order to travel about with her lovers, but George Sand, the courageous woman who dared to follow her chosen path, to shake off the yoke of prejudice, to claim for all human beings—women, men, labourers, peasants—the rights of humanity, George Sand, who even as a white-haired grandmother wrote: "I do not believe there is evil, there is only ignorance."

Dostoievsky's attitude towards women is clearly displayed in "An Author's Diary", which he wrote when he had long since escaped from his youthful illusions and exaggerations. Take this passage from the year 1877: "Russian society will be saved and renewed chiefly by the women of Russia. After the late war, in which the Russian woman revealed herself in all her nobleness, serene and pure, there can be no more doubts about her great destiny. One day at last the age-old prejudice will vanish away and 'barbarian' Russia will give due place to the Russian warrior's mother and sister, the self-denying martyr to the Russian man." Further on he says: it is quite inadmissible to think that women were not meant for the same rights, the same opportunities of work and success as men. "In the women of Russia we place all our hopes, from them will

come the spiritual regeneration and the moral uplifting of our society. . . . The Russian woman has herself taken the place that is due to her, has herself climbed the steps as far as she has been allowed to go. She has proved what heights she can attain and what she can achieve. . . . In the land of Russia are many women with noble, generous hearts, swelling with eagerness for social work and self-sacrifice."

He observed the efforts of women to gain admittance into the institutions of higher learning, and wrote in the "*Diary*" in 1876: "The pure hearted woman of Russia is prevailing over all hindrance and scorn. She is resolutely proclaiming her will to play her part in the affairs of the community and is giving herself to it unselfishly and with self-denial. Within the last decade the Russian man has given way terribly to cupidity, cynicism, materialism, while the woman has retained her faith in the pure idea and the service of it. Her struggle for higher education is revealing her earnestness and tenacity, and affording great examples of her courage." And elsewhere: "Higher learning alone possesses such seriousness, fascination and power, as to be able to appease the present general restlessness of women."

"An Author's Diary" gave Dostoievsky an excellent opportunity of keeping in close touch with the women of his time. He received—as he himself said—many "remarkable letters" from Russian women asking him: What to do? What path to choose? He answered these letters either personally

or in his journal. In a number published in June 1876, he gives a touching account of a girl of eighteen who came to see him. She said that she had a difficult examination to pass and would like somebody's advice. She spoke shyly but simply and directly and did not stay longer than ten minutes. During the Turko-Slavonic war there was a lack of Sisters of Mercy. The newspapers published appeals. And this young girl abandoned her studies and her examination and resolved to go to the war to help the wounded. Once more she went to Dostoievsky, this time not to discuss her plans, but to receive his blessing. Though Dostoievsky saw clearly that she had already taken her decision his compassion for her frail maidenliness moved him to try dissuasion: even if the work itself did not alarm her, it would still be hard for one who had grown up in a good, peaceful home, to bear the rough orders and demands of over-worked doctors. But she shook her head and only smiled. When Dostoievsky at last said: "God be with you, go! But when you have finished your work, hurry back quickly!" she replied: "Of course, I have my examination to pass," and went away radiant with joy. Dostoievsky describes this girl as the typical woman of the new era: honest and true, whose "proud, chaste heart has no fear that surrounding vice can taint it. . . . She claims the right to make sacrifices and to work, and realises that it is our duty to go ahead and do without grumbling the good deeds which we are calling for and

waiting for from others. . . . And all this, without any ambition or vanity, without glorying in their own heroism."

Before such women Dostoievsky bowed in homage; Anna Grigorievna was one of them but, strangely, we never encounter them in his novels.

### *Love—Anguish*

The novels of Dostoievsky develop amid explosive passion. When his characters love, they recognise no laws or conventions. In their abandon they enact frightful crimes, but also deeds of heroism.

The Russians do not know the love of Tristan and Iseult, of Dante and Beatrice, of Romeo and Juliet. They have no knights, no troubadours and minnesingers. In the love of the Russians there is something of pain and suffering. Dostoievsky is the most Russian of Russian writers, and therefore in his love, too, there are more shadows than sunlight. In a letter written in 1856 he says significantly: "Save me, Oh Lord, from that fearful experience. The joy of love is strong but its anguish is so fearful that it would be better not to love at all." And elsewhere: "Suffering and loving are one and the same."

Poignant sadness is the typically Russian note in Dostoievsky's love, and the main problems arise out of the triangular love of a woman and two men, or a man and two women. Nastasya Filopovna loves Myshkin and Ragozhin; Katerina Ivanovna—Mitya

and Ivan ; and Mitya in his turn loves not only Katerina Ivanovna, but also Grushenka : Versilov loves his own wife and the mother of the Youth ; and even the chaste Myshkin loves two women : Aglaya and Nastasya Filipovna, both of them genuinely and unselfishly. But there is no jealousy ; that is the remarkable peculiarity of the love portrayed by Dostoievsky. Grushenka indeed is ready to prick out the eyes of her rival, but Grushenka is Dostoievsky's most primitive woman and the other heroines bear no resemblance to her.

Katerina Ivanovna is much more significant. When Mitya has decided on Grushenka, she goes to the betrothed pair, and when she is alone with Mitya she kisses him on the hand, but when her rival Grushenka enters, she blanches, and with trembling lips whispers : "Forgive me !" Aglaya and Nastasya Filipovna, too, are rivals but they are not really jealous ; they keep trying to love one another, though it costs them a thousand pangs, and to build a bridge of friendship. The men are the same. Ragozhin and Prince Myshkin both love Nastasya Filipovna but they are not jealous. Jealousy always comprises hatred, but Myshkin and Ragozhin are good friends. We can understand when the mild and self-denying Myshkin says to Ragozhin : "I am not your enemy and I don't wish to hinder you in any way," but it is amazing, even awe-inspiring, to find the primitive, sensual Ragozhin after exchanging his cross with Myshkin, saying, referring to Nastasya Filipovna :

“Then take her too ! Such is fate ! Yours ! I withdraw. Remember Ragozhin.”

If even Dostoievsky’s characters feel jealousy, they always feel it as something humiliating, that must be suppressed or rooted out. Dostoievsky’s view is that if two people love one and the same person, this love is a basis for friendship. Two people who regard the same star as brightest, and who worship the same star and follow it, are linked in companionship by fate: they have to surmount the same obstacles, they are menaced by the same perils and the same happiness smiles on both.

If love is worship, it excludes jealousy, but if it is lust to master and possess, then it is inconceivable without jealousy.

### *The Love of Shatov*

Dostoievsky’s love is fundamentally tragic ; there is bliss in it and it never passes into domestic happiness. A lover is in continual torment. The coalescence of two beings, their dual isolation, when one and one are no longer two, but one, has no place in the art of Dostoievsky. He prayed all his life to the Madonna and the Child, but he never portrayed her. Only once, in “The Possessed”, did he depict woman as the giver of life.

It is striking that it is just in this blizzard of “The Possessed” that the tenderest blossoms of love are blasted. And this catastrophe is the more affecting

in that its victim is poor, lonely Shatov, the most gauche character in Dostoievsky. He had been a student at a university but had been expelled. Now he lives alone in discontented poverty.

Like almost all the characters of "The Possessed" he is obsessed by an idea. The Russian people is God's chosen people, but how is it possible that one people should be dearer to God than another? This dilemma weighs him down like a great stone and gives him no time nor energy for life itself. He is big and massive, with hands like paws, and hair like stubble. He is so depressed that he hates his own face and character, and regards himself as a monster, fit for exhibition at a fair. While abroad he took a wife, but she left him within three weeks, and he was not at all surprised: how could a woman stay with such a churl? But three years later, when revolution has broken out in the little town, his wife returns one night without warning, ill and broken, and that same night gives birth to a child. And that night Shatov is transformed by a love for this helpless, betrayed woman, and for this child of a stranger, and his soul which withered in darkness is filled with brightness. The only being who, for a few weeks, had loved him, has now come back to him. There is no bitterness nor reproach in Shatov's heart. Excited and amazed, he searches in the darkness for his matches, in his pathetic awkwardness he does not know what to do first, whether to heat the stove or prepare tea. He puts his wife into his bed, and takes

off his overcoat to cover her, as he has nothing else. Then this walrus tiptoes out of his room and stays in the lobby, standing with his face pressed into the corner, not daring to move for fear of wakening his wife. "This strong, rugged man, all bristles on the surface, was suddenly all softness and shining gladness." A youthful feeling that he had never known before stirred within him. The mystery of the birth of new life, the coming of a new soul into the world, fills him with awe. The stone beneath which he lay crushed, the dead idea, rolls away, he sees a new life before him with his wife and the child and God, in harmony with the whole universe, and feels that everything is good.

No sooner is the child born than Shatov goes with the revolutionary Erkel, in order to sever his connection, now abhorrent to him, with the Terrorists. On the way he asks Erkel : "Tell me, have you ever been happy ?" For his own soul is brimming with happiness. And just in this morning of awakening, the hand of Erkel, the paid servant of revolution, raises a revolver and Shatov dies a martyr's death.

Shatov's all-forgiving love is like the scented breath of Spring but it is an exception to the rule in Dostoievsky's treatment of love.

### *Passion*

The three forms in which Dostoievsky's love appears oftenest are 1. passion, which, at its darkest

level, passes into depravity ; 2. burning desire for union combined with the cold realisation that it is an impossibility ; 3. warm compassion.

Dostoievsky has minutely analysed all three of these manifestations of love, has given them a psychological and philosophical basis and embodied them in living figures.

Passion, irrational, destructive in its dualism, belongs to the sphere of the senses, and we are justified in not calling this feeling love, for in its essence—blind, unbridled violence—it is not far removed from hatred. Every beclouded victim of lust has moments when he asks himself in bewilderment : Do I love, or do I hate ?

Mitya, the slave of his senses, says : “ A man will fall in love with some beauty, with a woman’s body . . . and he’ll abandon his own children for her, sell his father and mother and his country, Russia, too. If he’s honest, he’ll steal ; if he’s humane, he’ll murder ; if he’s faithful, he’ll deceive.” He despises Grushenka, yet cannot tear himself away from her : “ Being in love does not mean loving. You may be in love with a woman and yet hate her.”

Passion, this whirlwind of the senses, destructive, injurious to self and to its object, is unreasoning and blind. Such is the passion that rages in Ragozhin when he thinks of Nastasya Filipovna. He longs that she should belong to him, as an inalienable possession ; but he feels that while proud, self-willed Nastasya may give herself, it would never

be to keep. Ragozhin kills her and then heaves a sigh of relief—no one will be able to seduce her any more, now she can never run away again. While she was alive he could not make her his own, and without her he could not live. Immediately after the murder he goes mad and never recovers. This is the passion of which Dostoevsky writes in a letter: "Love in such a form is a disease." On this same pyre of sensuality Katerina Ivanovna burns for Mitya and for Ivan, Versilov, for Katerina Ivanovna, the Gambler, for Polina. The Gambler confesses: "There were moments . . . when I would have given my life to strangle her! I swear if it had been possible on the spot to plunge a sharp knife in her bosom, I believe I should have snatched it up with relish. And yet I swear by all that's sacred that if at the Schlangenberg, at the fashionable peak, she really had said to me, 'Throw yourself down,' I should have thrown myself down at once also with positive relish."

Sensual passion passes into depravity. In the novels of Dostoevsky depravity is more a psychic than a physical phenomenon. The depraved cannot give himself to others, he can only swallow others up. The depraved man loves no one except himself. Depravity originates in exaggerated self-love, self-idolatry, and thus in all egoism there is latent, potential depravity. All aberrations of love are not depravity, and thus Mitya Karamazov is sinful, but not yet depraved, otherwise he would not have said

to the coachman: "You know that one has to make way. . . . One can't run over a man. One can't spoil people's lives. And if you have spoilt a life—punish yourself . . . if only you've spoilt, if only you've ruined any one's life—punish yourself and go away." He is unable to control his great, lustful body, but he has a warm heart capable of love. In a dream he sees a little naked child, in its mother's arms, which stretches out its emaciated little hands and cries; but the mother's breast is dry and sunken; and all around her are blackened smoking ruins. His heart trembles with pity, he longs to get up and do something at once. He does not, indeed, know what, but he feels the urgent need of doing something to soothe the crying babe, to comfort the blackened, parched mother. When he awakens, his heart is still full of inexpressible warmth, and his hatred against his tormenting judges, who wait to plague him with questioning, has gone.

Neither is Grushenka, the feminine counterpart of Mitya, depraved. Primitive, intoxicated with the sense of power, she makes fools of old Karamazov, of Mitya and of the other men, who, driven frantic by her sexual provocativeness, become dumb instruments in her soft hands. Yet in the end she gives up her cat-like tactics and falls genuinely in love with Mitya. She even wants to accompany him to Siberia and to share the burden of his life.

But Svidrigailov is depraved. He has enveloped himself in the slimy nets of his own ego. The outer

world exists only in order to minister to his pleasure. Stavrogin, too, is depraved, and his lust is cold and carefully calculated. He marries simple, lame Marfa Timofievna and seduces with his icy brilliance the arrogant, proud Liza. He tests his powers in pleasures inaccessible and unknown to others, to prove to himself and to others that his power has no limit. Stavrogin, Svidrigailov, old Karamazov, and their like are too solicitous about the security of their "ego" to attempt or even contemplate any worthy action.

### *Incompatibility*

"The Possessed" bears witness to the cruel fact that in the presence of our most dearly beloved we feel our loneliness most acutely.

In the relations of Liza and Stavrogin is present an intense desire for marriage together with the clear conviction that it is impossible. Liza and Stavrogin are drawn in bold, sharp outline, and placed under a bright light. In their self-consciousness they are people of our own time. They are unable, even for a moment, to forget themselves; in the greatest outbursts of feeling they are aware of why they act thus and not otherwise. Of Stavrogin we are told that he was one of those who cannot distinguish Sodom from the Madonna. Liza is clever and beautiful, but ill-balanced. It is with her inward nature in mind, that Dostoievsky describes her external appearance:

though pale and thin, there was in her whole bearing and appearance something conquering, and her dark eyes flashed proud independence. In the course of the novel Liza and Stavrogin meet only five or six times, but each encounter flames with Rembrandtesque colours, and each time Stavrogin's glittering iciness threatens more and more to freeze the fiery soul of Liza.

Let us dwell a little on their last meeting, during which all their pent-up feelings burst forth into the open. There are no whites and blues in this impressive picture ; the black background of night is streaked with yellow and green, and tongues of flame play around grey masses. Recall the scene. The revolution is in full career and the factory has been set on fire. From the windows of Stavrogin's house the fire can be seen quite plainly. It is daybreak and late autumn. Liza is standing in the great ball room, watching the dying conflagration.

Her green silk, lace-covered robe of yesterday is crumpled and put on hurriedly and carelessly. Her face looks weary and pale, but her eyes glow beneath her frowning brows. She goes to the window and presses her burning forehead against the cold pane. Last night she had run away from the fête and come to Stavrogin—surrendered herself to him. But this night has proved how alien they are to one another, proved that there could never be any intimacy. This night has proved that Stavrogin's brilliancy is but a mask behind which he conceals his inner deformity. Stavrogin

enters, but does not dare to come near her. They exchange disjointed remarks: according to the calendar it ought to have been already light whereas it is scarcely yet dawn, and talk of trivialities as people do, when they lack the courage and strength to broach the main issue.

Liza is convinced that Stavrogin is unworthy of her, but then again she is tormented by the question whether she has any right to demand something extraordinary and great? She, the pampered girl, who loves to pay her calls and to receive important visitors? Bitterly she confesses to Stavrogin: "I am a young lady, my heart has been trained on the opera, that's how it all began, that's the solution." Yet at the same time she waits for Stavrogin to say something corresponding, which would prove that he is not merely a mask, that he is not merely scattering spangles of glass. And when she is disappointed in her expectation, she lacerates herself with self-reproach: "I can be great for a single moment, that's all. I can't for longer. Both of us can talk grandly, but I know that neither you nor I are capable of anything outstanding . . . I gathered all my life into one great moment, and though I am content it is bitter to confess: this moment was not at all so great."

A double murder is committed in this night of horror. Stavrogin allows his poor wife, Marfa Timofievna, to be murdered, and he himself murders Liza's soul. And when we compare these two murders

we feel instantly: the death of the soul is more terrible than the death of the body.

For a few moments Liza waits for Stavrogin to assure her that he is not the author of this bloody crime, that he did not murder his wife. But Stavrogin, rigid and smooth as a mask, says nothing. And Liza runs from him, from his house. Runs away in her pretty ballroom frock, along the muddy path. Dostoievsky spares her nothing. He makes her meet with her former admirer who tries to stop her and murmurs something about her nobleness and beauty, but Liza tears herself away from him! "Oh, beat me like a dog, I am unworthy."

She forces her way into the wild crowd of revolutionaries who kill her as the mistress of a wealthy over-lord. But this does not shock us for it is only the body of Liza that dies; inwardly, spiritually she was already dead; her heart had been crushed in Stavrogin's splendid mansion. And when the soul is dead, the death of the body is no longer fearful.

We read these pages wondering at the strangeness of our human code. If a man commits murder of the body, a heavy penalty threatens him, but if he murders the soul, we simply shrug our shoulders.

### *Compassion*

Dostoievsky's love trembles between the two abysses of lust and compassion. If he has some characters who are too sensual, he has others who are

almost insufficiently so. Dostoievsky is the only writer who depicts a spiritual love as intense and mastering and active as physical love. The starting point of spiritual love is compassion. "Compassion is the chief and perhaps the unique law of the existence of humanity."

Compassion is not pity. We pity a beggar, we feel compassion for a martyr. Pity humiliates. When we pity a man we make him feel his helplessness, and—perhaps unconsciously—we pride ourselves that we ourselves are not borne down by our burdens; but when we have compassion we admire the strength that bears the burden and humbly ask ourselves if we are worthy to take some small share of the burden upon our own shoulders? We look with a superior air at the object of our pity, but to him on whom we have compassion we bow deeply. Only those who are not shut up in the prison of their own narrow selves are capable of compassion.

Vanya, Alyosha, the Idiot, and Raskolnikov feel the glow of compassion. Compassion makes the Idiot, otherwise yielding and meek, shut his eyes to convention and become a law unto himself. In the middle of the night he goes, without invitation, to the house of a stranger, Nastasya Filipovna, because he feels that she will not be able to bear with her troubles alone and by herself.

Loving compassion burns most brightly in the relations of Raskolnikov to Sonya. Just because he is so proud and self-willed, his humility before the

sufferings of another is unforgettable in its nobleness. His feeling towards Sonya is neither sexual lust nor the love of man for woman, but the passion of one human being for another. Recall the midnight hour in Sonya's room. Raskolnikov, unable to find rest, has come to Sonya, who earns money to keep her little sister by prostituting herself in the streets. Sonya's bare room is like a barn, furnished only with shabby yellow wallpaper, a bedstead, a chair and a table. A candle in a copper candlestick burns on the table. Sonya, humiliated, an outcast from society, feels herself a leper. The presence of Raskolnikov brings her sweet joy, but also painful shame. She does not dare even to sit down in his company. And he, normally so impatient and irritable, speaks with her in a "gentle, friendly voice". Dreading to touch the main subject, they, too, talk at first of trivial matters. Sonya, in her agitation, seems to Raskolnikov like a canary—so little and frail in her heroism.

In the attitude of Raskolnikov to Sonya is something of Soloviev's later conception of love. A healthy egoism is innate in everyone, but in true love one assigns to the other the same rights as to himself, and wishes the beloved to occupy that central place which, in his egoism, he had always reserved for himself. To love means to experience the sorrows of another with the same bitter, inescapable anguish as our own.

Raskolnikov looks into Sonya's face and sees there "insatiable compassion", meaningless and hopeless.

Almost harshly he points out that Sonya saves nothing by her sacrifices, since her little sister, when she grows up, will most probably have to go the same way.

"No, no, it can't be, no!" she cries desperately, as though someone had stabbed her with a knife. "God would not allow anything so awful!" "He lets others come to it," answers Raskolnikov pitilessly.

Sonya can bear it no longer, her little remaining pride is crushed. She buries her face in her hands and sobs like a child, quietly and bitterly. "Five minutes passed. He still paced up and down the room in silence, not looking at her. At last he went up to her: his eyes glittered. He put his two hands on her shoulders and looked straight into her tearful face. His eyes were hard, feverish and piercing, his lips were twitching. All at once he bent down quickly and dropping to the ground, kissed her foot . . . 'What are you doing to me?' she muttered, turning pale, and a sudden anguish clutched at her heart. He stood up at once. 'I did not bow down to you, I bowed down to all the suffering of humanity,' he said wildly and walked away to the window."

That is the profoundest expression of Dostoievsky's love.

## CHAPTER V.

### STYLE

STYLE in literature corresponds to the face of a man in life: something outward testifying to what is within and therefore inseparable from it.

Style is the external embodiment of some inner originality, and its every part expresses the same as the whole. Thus where we speak of style three elements must be present: 1. some inner originality; where none exists, we may speak of technique but not of style; 2. power to express this originality; 3. to express it in such a way that every part bears the same impress as the whole.

And so style, as individualised form, is dependent upon the nature of the artist. The more powerful the artist, the more definitely will he work out a style of his own, that is, a mould in which to express his experience. The more lifeless the artist, the oftener does he cast from ready-made patterns.

The view is no longer held that the novels of Dostoievsky are, in respect of form, chaotic, that they have no style. In his youthful works there is much that is superfluous, the introductions are inordinately long, but in the later works there is a definite and original style. We shall attempt to

present briefly the main characteristics of Dostoevsky's style.

Not only in his origin, but in his structure and aesthetic, Dostoevsky is the first Russian writer who is a townsman. Before Dostoevsky Russian literature had little to do with town life. Pushkin and Gogol had already written about the town, but for its essential melody it had been restricted to fields and forests: the slow, broad-flowing style breathed an atmosphere of farm, hamlet and steppe. But Dostoevsky is the typical, sensitive city-dweller: discontented and impatient, he is always yearning for new impressions; with feverish excitement he pours out his agitated thoughts. At first, before we have become accustomed to his world, we feel as though he has taken us into a madhouse: all are rushing about at high speed in a crowded room, weeping hysterically, screaming and praying. But if we look deeply we discover our own selves in this frenzied house, only in a magnified and exaggerated form. In "The Idiot" Dostoevsky himself defines his method of characterisation: people such as live in books are not exactly such as we find in life, and nevertheless "they are even truer than truth itself", since in actuality we see the essences of men in diluted form, but in art—in concentrate.

Dostoevsky plans his works like a dramatist: first he introduces us to his characters, then come the objectives for which the characters are striving and the mass of obstacles which prevent their

attainment, and finally the solution, either catastrophe or victory.

Although he has written nothing for the stage, Dostoievsky, who had such love for Shakespeare, is essentially a dramatist. Almost all Dostoievsky's novels have been produced on the stage since his death. Moreover, the Czech composer O. Jeremiash has made "The Brothers Karamazov" into an opera, and "The House of the Dead" has been recast as a libretto by another Czech—Janacek. Dostoievsky's novels have been acted without serious changes, by cutting out the descriptive passages and stringing together the dramatically tense, fast-moving dialogues in which are contained the psychology of the characters and the plot of the novel.

Of Dostoievsky's richness in characters we have already spoken. From each of his novels a different type of writer might have turned out a whole series of novels; they are so packed with material.

He crams the most diverse events into a few hours or days. The first day in "The Idiot" occupies nearly 180 pages, and is divided into four scenes; in a third class compartment, at the wealthy General Epanchin's house, at the poor clerk Ganya's, and with the beautiful Nastasya Filipovna. The whole complicated plot of "The Brothers Karamazov" is compressed into four days. The solution which we expect even in the early chapters is continually postponed. When Mitya is arrested, the reader would gladly know whether he is really guilty. The eleventh

book begins on the eve of Mitya's trial, but the author is in no hurry to tell us the verdict of the court. First of all we must experience everything possible: Mitya's horror, his longing for life; and on almost every page the prospects change: guilty, innocent, acquitted, condemned: and only after twenty-four chapters do we learn the verdict of the court and the true facts of the crime. And thus for more than 200 pages the author inflames the reader's impatience.

Dostoievsky thinks in concrete images, inductively, empirically: he embodies his idea in some particular incident derived from life. If he writes in his journal on beggars or on the ravages of alcohol in a general way, under headings, the result is pale and lifeless. Himself aware of this he invents a glaring example and embodies it in a scene or a portrait; and thus were created in "An Author's Diary" remarkable tales such as "The Heavenly Christmas Tree" and "A Gentle Spirit". Dostoievsky is a philosophic writer but he was incapable of writing philosophic treatises.

Dostoievsky is an expressionist. He lavishes colours, scenes, events. The mellifluous rhythms that delight us in the art of Gogol and Turgenev are foreign to him. He is a visual artist. During his travels abroad picture galleries attracted him more than operas or concerts. On journeys he sometimes stopped at some town or other, or altered his route, simply in order to spend a few minutes before a

beloved picture. His yearning for pictures was passionate, as for human beings. Towards music he was quite apathetic. Wagner is his contemporary, but in "An Author's Diary", which contains such frequent observations on the great men of the world, Wagner is not mentioned. In the same year in which he published "The Brothers Karamazov" there appeared also Tchaikovsky's Eugène Onegin, but we have no indication that Dostoievsky was interested in the great Russian composer.

Contrasts fascinated Dostoievsky, as his artistic taste testifies. Of all the pictures he had seen, Dostoievsky was most attracted by Rafael's softly caressing Sistine Madonna and by Holbein's dreadfully naturalistic Christ. In his study in Petersburg hung a large reproduction of the Sistine Madonna, and he loved Dresden because there, in an art gallery, awaited him a gentle, innocent Virgin Mother, without foreboding of her son's way of Golgotha.

He visited Bâle simply to see in the original the Christ of Holbein. Descriptions of this picture emerge several times in his novels. In "The Idiot" we read: "The picture represented Christ who has only just been taken from the Cross. . . . I believe artists usually paint Christ with extraordinary beauty of face. They strive to preserve that beauty even in His most terrible agonies. In this picture there's no trace of beauty. It is in every detail the corpse of a man who has endured infinite agony. . . . His face

still bears traces of warmth and life. Nothing is rigid in it yet, so that there's still a look of suffering in the face of the dead man, as though he were still feeling it (that has been very well caught by the artist). Yet the face has not been spared in the least. It is simply nature, and the corpse of a man, whoever he might be, must really look like that after such suffering. . . . The face is fearfully crushed by blows, swollen, covered with fearful swollen and blood-stained bruises, the eyes are open and squinting. But strange to say, as one looks at this corpse of a tortured man, a peculiar and curious question arises: if just such a corpse (and it must have been just like that) was seen by all His disciples, by those who were to become His chief apostles, by the women that followed Him, by all who believed in Him and worshipped Him, how could they believe that that martyr would rise again? The question instinctively arises: if death is so awful and the laws of nature so mighty, how can they be overcome? How can they be overcome when even He did not conquer them, He who vanquished nature in His lifetime? . . . Looking at this picture, one conceives of nature in the shape of an immense, merciless, dumb beast, or, though it sounds strange, in the form of a huge machine of the most modern construction which, dull and insensible, has aimlessly clutched, crushed and swallowed up a great, priceless Being, a Being worth all nature and its laws."

When we compare these very different pictures which were Dostoevsky's favourites we understand

the essence of his style. Dostoievsky saw man's beastliness as well as his saintliness, and thus his experience of the world, and likewise his style, is woven of contrasts. His characters are set in contrast. In a third class compartment there sits beside the crudely sensual, dark Ragozhin, the fair, ethereal Idiot. Arrogantly intellectual Raskolnikov is bound to humble, religious Sonya. The background of individual scenes is drawn in contrast with the corresponding action: a discussion on the most sacred subjects—God, immortality—takes place in a low tavern; and in the cell of white-haired Zosima, the sanctuary of holiness and self-control, Ivan explains his theory that everything is permissible. There is Shakespearean contrast, too, in the sequence of the individual scenes. After the religious legend of the Great Inquisitor comes Ivan's meeting with the cowardly, depraved Smerdiakov; after Zosima's serene death in the monastery—Alyosha's visit to dissolute Grushenka; after the scene of legal sophistry where everyone drags the truth like elastic to his own side—the burial of Ilusha with the boys' tears of unfeigned sorrow and their affectionate comradeship. And in the soul of the individual character, too, Dostoievsky has portrayed contrasts: the greatest love is felt by uncouth Shatov, and the atheist Ivan hymns the glory of Christ.

Dostoievsky sets his characters skilfully in the play of Rembrandtesque lighting. Patches of brightness glint weirdly in the gloom, sheaves of light divide the

darkness, and we do not know which is more powerful : the glitter of the light or the terror of the darkness. Thus it is in the life of the soul, even as in the purely external scenic arrangement.

Sonya and Raskolnikov are reading the Bible, the whole room is in darkness, except for the candle stump flickering on the table. Verchovensky is awaiting the suicide of Kirilov, when suddenly the candle in his room flares up and goes out. And in "The Idiot" : on Nastasya Filipovna's birthday. It is near midnight, and the whole company has crowded round the blazing fire. A restless light flits over the pale, strained, avaricious faces ; the flame is fantastically reflected in their feverish eyes. Or a little further on in the same novel Hypolit reads the confessions of his tormented soul just before sunrise in a white night in visionary Petersburg. And at the end of the novel. It is Ragozhin's room. The night is dark and heavy curtains cover the windows. On the bed, amid lace and silk, lies Nastasya Filipovna, murdered. Through a tiny, uncovered space in the window steal a few fine rays of moonlight. This same light-darkness prevails in "The Brothers Karamazov," too. When Ivan reveals himself most profoundly to Alyosha, the brothers are standing in lantern light on the dark road. It is a dark southern night when the Great Inquisitor, light in hand, enters the prison cell of his humble guest.

Dostoievsky's style is visionarily realistic. He himself emphasised that he was "a realist in the noblest

sense of that word", and would ask: "Is there anything more fantastic than reality?" He presents reality with dreadful fidelity, but normally we do not see it thus. Dostoievsky's outlines are sharper, his colours are more vivid. Sometimes old familiar things appear thus in our dreams: larger and more beautiful, or more dreadful and appalling than we have ever seen, or dared imagine them in the day time. Dostoievsky paints reality as a dream and the dream as reality. In almost all his novels there is the description of some dream. In "Crime and Punishment" Raskolnikov's dream of the tortured horse produces a more dreadful impression than the murder of the usurer. In "The Idiot" Hypolit's dream of the loathsome, hairy reptile expresses what his confession could not express so clearly: his terror of death, his protest against the incomprehensible order of life. In the fantastic tale, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", a dream reveals to the hero "a new, noble, wonderful life", and Dostoievsky adds that dreams are not born of the mind but come from the heart—nowadays we say the subconscious—and so reveal man's inmost, hidden strata. How closely the dream is related to actuality, how dreadfully it expresses the psychological reality, is most vividly brought out in Ivan Karamazov's nightmare about the devil.

Dostoievsky, epileptic, with experience of dying, had no time to look about him and catalogue the minutiae of his environment. From his description of epilepsy in "The Idiot" we know that in the

instant preceding the onset all things stand out in high relief; every quality of brightness and colour blazes forth simultaneously for one single moment. All Dostoevsky's novels would seem to be the work of these brief moments before the onset.

## CHAPTER VI

### HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

#### *The Beautiful*

“BEAUTY will save the world.” These are Dostoevsky’s words. It is a strange beauty that he gave to the world, a beauty which has an element of fierceness in it but which quivers with his own saintly spirit.

His beauty is not harmonious, static and restful. It is a fiery activity, a tragic blaze of flame. Harmony is a final good which is unattainable on earth.

He does not seek beauty in nature; a divine ordering of the cosmos is alien to him. He does not know the intoxication of music; for him the only revelation of beauty is man. The words of Mitya Karamazov expressed Dostoevsky’s own conception of beauty: “Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it has not been fathomed and never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side. . . . I can’t endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What’s still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna and his heart may be on fire

with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in the days of youth and innocence. . . . The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."

All the characters of Dostoievsky are susceptible to beauty. Even the meek, blue-eyed Idiot is deeply stirred when he sees Nastasya Filipovna's wonderfully beautiful portrait. He cannot tear himself from it, he gazes and gazes, and resolves when he is alone in the room to cover the picture with kisses.

"Beauty cannot be judged", "Beauty is a riddle", "Beauty is power", and many other aphorisms on beauty are scattered throughout Dostoievsky's novels.

Dostoievsky's idea of beauty is fundamentally the same as Soloviev's. "Beauty without goodness and truth is a mockery." Dostoievsky, too, was unable to imagine evil beauty. Recall how Prince Myshkin gazes at the portrait of Nastasya Filipovna: overcome by her beauty, he says, in a bemused, pensive way: "A wonderful face—Ah, were she only good, all would be saved." If she had turned out not to be good, her beauty would have vanished in Myshkin's eyes like a mirage.

Dostoievsky could sit for hours in a picture gallery absorbed in some single picture. But the face of a living human being could attract him even more than paintings. The human face expresses the highest beauty, that beauty which will save the world, and one only needs to study it, understanding every

feature as the symbol of some spiritual quality. Nature is as dead in the novels of Dostoevsky ; in them there are no descriptions of landscapes, rivers, forests, and meadows, but he has painted with words a legion of human faces. And for him the beautiful faces are not those that are calm and poised, but those on which God wrestles with the devil, where the boundaries meet. Those who yearn for the good are beautiful, even though they are tainted by evil, and the more passionate their yearning the more beautiful do they become. That is why Nastasya Filipovna and Katerina Ivanovna are so beautiful ; but Grushenka's struggle to free herself from bestiality is faint-hearted, and therefore it is said of her : hers was the beauty of a moment, ephemeral beauty, which the years do not deepen but destroy. In Stavrogin thought freezes life ; though intellectually gifted and highly cultured he cannot distinguish good from evil, and therefore his face, too, in spite of its perfect features, is terrifying as a mask. But the old Karamazov is frankly loathsome, for he is simply flesh. Children, on the contrary, are never ugly in Dostoevsky's world, for they cannot wittingly do evil.

Beautiful is his face who yearns after the good, but what is the good ?

### *The Good*

“ All is flowing and blending.” Such are the Heraclitean words of the elder Zosima, the mouth-piece of Dostoevsky's ethical and religious ideal.

In the ethic of Plato the good and the evil are direct opposites, the idea of good cannot comprise evil. Not so with Dostoievsky. Zosima becomes a follower of the path of God and to this path he is led by a desperate man, a criminal. Alyosha, in his hour of despair, goes to Grushenka and this dissolute woman helps him to find inner equipoise ; on leaving her he says : " You've raised my soul from the depths." And Grushenka will never forget that Alyosha, her " bright young moon ", called her his sister. The good and the evil dwell together in terrible proximity ; they cannot be separated by a sharply drawn line ; between the good and the evil we see constant interaction.

And another mark of Dostoievsky's ethic : it is the ethic of love, and not the ethic of duty, defended and advocated by Kant. Duty without love is like a tree without leaves. Dostoievsky ridicules the barren ethic of duty in Ivan's nightmare ; the devil tells Ivan that he is bored to death of his profession as devil, but that he sticks to it—out of duty ! The devil here symbolises the Philistine ethic, the ethic of the narrow bourgeois ; he would give up all evil, all titles and respect, if he might turn himself into a seven-pood merchant's wife who, fat and contented, lights candles to the glory of God.

The characters of Dostoievsky often do not fulfil their duties, but they all love. It is not out of duty that Prince Myshkin goes in the night to comfort Nastasya Filipovna, it would not have occurred to

any man, not even the most perfect, to do such a thing out of duty ; but he goes because he loves her. When Ivan exposes his doubt-tormented soul to Alyosha, when he bares the nature of his spirit before him, a man of duty would have found no response, but Alyosha rises quietly and kisses his brother. The same thing is done by the mysterious visitor when the Great Inquisitor has tortured him with the thorns of reproach. In the novels of Dostoievsky, as in life, are many such moments. Dumb are the commandments of duty on that night when Shatov receives under his roof his unfaithful wife pregnant with the child of another man. Had his heart not trembled with love, he would not have opened his door, and even if he had opened it, his wife would not have remained with him. For to forgive out of duty is an insult, but to forgive in love is a caress, which heals the wounds of the heart that is injured as well as the heart of the injurer, for oftenest the injurer is one who himself is in pain.

A third characteristic of Dostoievsky's ethic is that, like Kant, he feels deep reverence for man. Kant's words, that everything has value, but man alone has worth, might have been written by Dostoievsky. Yet in the further consequences their ethics part company. Kant, with his assertion : better for man to perish than to stain his moral conscience—ranks himself among the sternest idealists and reveals, at the same time, how far removed he was from real life, from the individual, living man. He exalted

man's worth, but his approach to man is schematic and abstract. In the ethic of Kant we have always the feeling that it has been thought out at the study table, written by a man who has never loved, who has never stood by the sick-bed of a passionately beloved one, who has never gone through those moments when we would calmly surrender all, even truth and moral worth, only to ease a little the suffering of one whom we love better than ourselves. Dostoievsky knew such moments. He knew men, too, in their infinite diversity, and realised that no single law can be applied to all.

Close to life, the ethic of Dostoievsky is individual. The most arduous demand of ethical life is simply this: to bring the external life into harmony with the inner self, to give expression to one's own personality, without harming others in so doing. All men cannot be measured with one and the same rod, and those who hold up the same ideal to all, summon mankind to an unnatural struggle, as the result of which man comes to hate himself. Life is difficult when we hate others, but it becomes unbearable when we hate ourselves.

Dostoievsky knew the purifying power of suffering, but he never affirmed that suffering is the only means to spiritual exaltation. Everything depends on who suffers and how he suffers. Alyosha says truly: "Such heavy burdens are not for all men. For some they are impossible."

On presumptuous, cold Stavrogin Dostoievsky

lays a heavy burden which bows the head too arrogantly upheld. But when Mitya, inwardly lacerated, worn out with the struggle against himself, asks Alyosha if he must take up his cross and go without resistance to Siberia, in order that his ungovernable sensual nature may be mastered, Alyosha shakes his head. No, Mitya with his lust for life bears no martyr's cross ; he would not become a saint but only an irritable man. And he persuades Mitya to run away.

Alyosha himself is virginally chaste and shy, but he does not repulse hysterical Lise's love. He kisses her, and with kindly heart accepts the sick girl's letters, knowing that only thus can he give to the soul of this crippled girl the faith without which she cannot live.

Dostoievsky knew that it is impossible to set up some ideal theory, and then stretch everyone upon this Procrustean bed. Great ideas are often hostile to life.—“These are ideals, therefore they are pitiless,” this conclusion is expressed by Dostoievsky in one of his earliest novels.

Dostoievsky puts his faith not in humanity, like the socialists, nor in the superman's great, unique individuality, like the followers of Nietzsche and the proclaimers of hero-worship, but in God-man. He believes that every man has a reflection of the divine within him. “God took seeds from different worlds and sowed them on this earth, and His garden grew up . . . but what grows, lives and is alive only

through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you, the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it."

In every man there is a seed of God, and therefore no man can serve as the means to the ends of any other man, however lofty these ends may be. If any man ceases to believe that everyone bears within him a spark of God, then all the bestial elements in him are unleashed, and there is a chaos of instincts such as we see in "The Possessed" which is a prophecy of the Bolshevik revolution.

And because every man is a likeness of God, we must ever bear in mind that we dare not found our own happiness on the unhappiness of others. This question more than any other tormented Dostoievsky. Already in "Crime and Punishment" he is considering this problem, and he finds a convincing solution to it in "The Brothers Karamazov", which he finally clarifies in his speech at the Pushkin festival, in which his whole philosophy of life is kindled into a single flame.

In this famous speech Dostoievsky asks: if it were granted to humanity to build the edifice of destiny with the final aim of making all people happy, of giving them all everlasting joy, but if for the attainment of this it were indispensable to torture one single man, not a Shakespeare, but merely some honest old man—would such an edifice of happiness

be acceptable? And with a burning conviction, in which are consumed all the doubts of his earlier years, he answers: no conscious being would wish to be the architect of this structure, and not for one moment can he admit the thought that humanity itself could accept that edifice of happiness, aware that in its foundations are buried the tears of a man. In his speech at the Pushkin celebrations Dostoievsky condemned his Raskolnikov and the other self-willed individualists who regard themselves as the centre of creation, and who in their lordly, insatiable egocentricity are convinced that they have more rights than others.

By processes of pure logic and reason we may reach the view of Raskolnikov that an old, useless, female usurer, an infamous skinflint, is of less worth than a talented young student and his honest family, who must go under in utter poverty. If the old hag's money were his, he might finish his studies, and toil with self-abnegation on behalf of all the humiliated and downtrodden. Had he not a right to kill her? From the purely rational standpoint it is impossible to deny it. That is why all Dostoievsky's intellectuals—for his characters in general can never stop mid-way—arrive at the perilous conclusion: if there is no God, everything is permissible.

For Dostoievsky morality cannot exist without religion; without religion we cannot distinguish good from evil.

The ethic of Dostoievsky is contained in his religion.

His ethic is a heteronomous derivative of God. If there is no God, then there is no ethic, no need for an ethic, and all is permissible. But does God exist?

### *Doubt*

“God has tormented me all my life,” says Kirilov, and almost all the characters of Dostoievsky might say the same. For a true Russian, whether there is God and immortality are the prime and most urgent questions. Russians when they meet for the first time in some reeking tavern can immediately plunge into metaphysics and begin examining the “cursed questions” to which no one has yet found an answer. They talk for hours on end, then rise up, go their ways and forget one another.

Has God created man or has man created God? The characters of Dostoievsky struggle with this question. If there is no God, then man has invented Him—thus reasons Ivan Karamazov, Dostoievsky’s most intellectual and most terrible rebel against God—and it is incomprehensible how the idea of God could occur to such fierce and violent beasts as men. And Ivan’s keen logic presses forward: the devil does not exist either; he too, is the creation of man, and of course man has created him in his own likeness, for it is impossible to create otherwise.

Dostoievsky shows us more dreadful abysses of doubt than the greatest atheist could have devised.

In his novels we find not only every possible belief, but all kinds of unbelief, atheism and blasphemy. The crude blasphemer is seen in old Karamazov, with his spitting on holy images and his saying : the extreme penalty to him who thought of God ; the stupid godless man in Smerdiakov ; the cheap denier of God in the rationalist and socialist Rakitin ; the nihilist in Pyotor Verckovensky, obsessed with the idea of destruction, a forerunner of Russian Bolshevism. Then there is a second group : the idealistic atheists—Kirilov, Versilov, Ivan Karamazov—whose protest against God is but the thirst for His presence. And beside these doubters stands the group of believers. False religion is personified in Shatov (God is the God of the Russian nation), narrow dogmatism and servile adherence to the letter in Ferapont, sympathetic dogmatism in Father Paisy, yearning faith in Alyosha, and finally true, all-embracing religion in Zosima, who can be held up as an ideal to the Orthodox, to Catholics, Protestants, Theosophists—to all who seek perfection.

“ My Hosannah has come through a great fire of doubt,” confesses Dostoievsky. This fire of doubt burns in all his novels, but it flares up most powerfully in the legend of the Great Inquisitor. Let us consider it somewhat more closely :

Fifteen centuries have passed since Christ left the earth, promising to return. And men await Him. There is no proof, but there is faith in the hearts of men and their tears well up for Him. They expect

Him, love Him and hope for Him as of old. And Christ, in His boundless compassion, wishes to descend once more among men. To the great martyrs He had ere this from time to time appeared, but now He decides to appear to all people, to the suffering, tortured, sinful people, who still love Him like children. It happens in a town in the South, in the sun-scorched streets of Seville, at the time of the Inquisition, when heretics are being burned daily. He appears quietly, unostentatiously, and yet—and this is the wonder of it—every one recognises Him. The people rush to Him irresistibly, they surround Him. “He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love shines in His heart.” He stretches out His hand, blessing everyone. As in times long gone by He works miracles again; sight is restored to the blind and the touch of His garments heals the sick. The people weep and kiss the earth on which He has walked. At this moment the Great Inquisitor appears in the public square: an old man of noble appearance, in a coarse, drab-coloured cassock. Ninety years of age, he is a shrewd, heartless ascetic. He gives orders to take the stranger and cast Him into prison. But in the night, in the gloomy, black, sultry Seville night, the Great Inquisitor, light in hand, opens the ponderous iron door, enters the cell of his unearthly visitor and speaks to Him all night, as though to himself, to his other self or to some hallucination. In the Great Inquisitor Dostoevsky has embodied the

struggle of man against his own fundamental godliness, which struggle is Europe's travail at this present time. The Great Inquisitor is the incarnation of rationalism, of socialism, as well as of the Catholic Church ; his essence is—power. Let us follow his thoughts. To his strange visitor he says : “ I care not who Thou art, whether He or some other, Thou hast nothing to add to what has been said of old. To-morrow we shall burn Thee. The very people who kissed Thy feet even to-day, will scatter blazing coals under them to-morrow. Thou wouldest have man free, but man, this impotent, spoiled rebel, can endure anything but freedom. We (that is those who hold the power in their hands) have taken from man the possibility of revolt, have taken away freedom from him, and we have opened for him the door to happiness, for man is never so happy as when he combines the *appearance* of freedom with actual slavery.”

The Great Inquisitor rebukes Christ for His ignorance of man. He, too, once thought like Christ, but came to his senses and, refusing to subserve such madness any more, he has taken to amending the mistakes of Christ. The Great Inquisitor is wise—so far as intellectuality can be wise. He says : “ Thou didst not understand man for Thou didst not give him what he needed most.” In refusing the temptation of the devil, Christ proved that He did not understand human nature. Those who have really ruled in the world, have always accepted this temptation of

the devil: first of all they have given the people bread, knowing that man loves above all his own naked life-instinct; then they have governed by force and promised miracles. Christ did not jump from the roof of the temple, did not turn the stones into bread, did not accept the power promised by the devil over all living creatures; for He wanted man's spontaneous love, not a love elicited by miracles or power. But spontaneous, unfettered love is always unfulfilled and tragic. Christ took away from men the hard, iron-lettered law, and men had to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil, holding before their eyes, as the only criterion, the person of Christ. "They could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems. So that, in truth, Thou didst Thyself lay the foundation for the destruction of Thy kingdom." Thus stabs the sharp knife of the Great Inquisitor's logic. Christ claimed too much of man, His claims were pitiless. "Respecting him less, Thou wouldest have asked less of him. That would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter"—concludes the Great Inquisitor in his monologue of perfectly wrought dialectic, and this final conclusion reminds us of the expression already quoted: "These are ideals, therefore they are pitiless."

For a moment the white-haired cardinal interrupts his icy logic: "Why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry. I

do not want Thy love, for I love Thee not." And then he continues coldly, inexorably: we must rule over the man-beast, and he will drench with his bloody tears the churches and pedestals of power everywhere. And all the millions will be happy, except those few thousands who must govern. And all the people will die quietly to find beyond the grave only death. . . . The Great Inquisitor rises to depart. "To-morrow I shall burn Thee. Dixi." There is deadly silence in the room. All the thoughts that can be shaped into words, all the piercing arguments of logic have been uttered; the human brain has been racked to its limit. There is nothing more to be said. But the human heart continues to throb, and from its very depths rises something mute, powerful, irrepressible, beyond the grasp of thought: there rises an infinite love, in presence of which thinker and prover vanish. Christ rises and kisses the lips of the Great Inquisitor. The latter shudders, feeling his helplessness against the power of love. He opens the door in haste and lets his prisoner depart, bidding Him never to return.

The humble visitor disappears, but the Great Inquisitor remains alone with his anguish and his idea. His fate is continual self-immolation. In his eyes men are only contemptible rebels over whom severe control is necessary. Christ, on the contrary, loves in every man his capacity to rise to heights near to Himself. The Great Inquisitor does not believe in God; that is why he cannot believe in man, why

he compares him to some insect, the destruction of which is no sin.

The legend shows Dostoievsky's creative genius at its highest level. The artistic form of the legend is wonderful. Christ all the time remains silent, the Great Inquisitor all the time speaks and argues. He shows brilliant logic and great power of will. But Christ's silence, His humility are more persuasive than the Inquisitor's wordy arguments. Here have collided two first principles of the universe: intellect and faith, power and love, the senselessness of life and the sense of life.

### *Christ*

“ Till now I have been a child of unbelief and doubt, and such I shall remain, I feel, to my dying day. What dreadful tortures must I suffer and continue to suffer through my longing to believe, which with every fresh contradiction grows ever stronger. And yet God grants me occasional moments in which I am perfectly tranquil. In such moments I love and feel that I am loved too. In these moments I have created the symbol of my faith, containing all that is pure and holy to me. This symbol is very simple: one has to believe that there is none purer, profounder, more symbolical, more manly and more perfect than Christ, and not only that there *is* none such but, as I tell myself with fervid love, that there can be none. If someone were to prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if it were really the case that there is

no truth in Christ, I should prefer to cling to Christ, rather than to the truth," wrote Dostoievsky in a letter in 1854, soon after his release from prison and penal servitude, as he looked back on the gloomiest period of his life. He remained true to this declaration of faith to the end of his life. In one of his latest novels, "The Possessed", we find the same conviction: even if we could prove with mathematical certitude that the truth lies outside of Christ, it is better to remain with Christ than with the truth.

Dostoievsky's theodicy is not rooted in intellectual categories, but in love, and in the centre of his religion is set Christ. For him, Christ is not a bygone historical fact, a remote, unattainable miracle, that has no place in real life. He does not shut Christianity up in churches as dogmatic religion does, nor does he shut it up at home, as personal religion is apt to do. He demands a Christianity radiating throughout the universe, pervading all life, personal and social, and he affirms: Where Christ reigns, there will reign love, concord and brotherhood. But he knows, too, that such Christianity is still only a goal.

Dostoievsky's conception of Christ is impressive and peculiarly his own. Around Christ is a crest of lofty mountains, for the Christ of Dostoievsky is an aristocrat with absolute inner freedom; He needs nothing, seeks to persuade nobody. Christ has achieved absolute spiritual freedom by renouncing power; power bereaves the rulers, as well as the

ruled, of freedom. Christ knows only the power of love—the only power that can be wedded with freedom.

Dostoievsky knows that neither juridical laws, nor the commandments of religion, nor the imperatives of reason, can decide in every case what is good and what is evil, what must be done, what must be rejected. There is but one never failing criterion—the personality of Christ Himself. He who awakens in himself at every step, in every task, the image of Christ, who asks: *Would Christ act thus?* will always find the right path. Christ is the one sure test of our conscience.

Christ is the incarnation of infinite spiritual perfection, but a single spark of His spirit glimmers in every man. Only because Dostoievsky believed in the God-man was he able to love every individual man and embrace the whole creation *sub specie amoris*.

### *Faith*

“There’s no proving it, though you can be convinced of it,” says the serene Zosima, who has already traversed the tragic path on which the characters of Dostoievsky still linger. The existence of God cannot be proved like a geometrical theorem, but he who is able to reach inner harmony with God, will find Him.

Zosima, the voice of Dostoievsky’s religious ideals, is not a monk, but an “elder”, and an elder is a

God-fearing, holy man who, though he lives in the monastery, is outside the monachal hierarchy. He is not an ascetic, nor an ethereal angel in whose reality no one can believe ; he is a man who has trodden a long and difficult path in life, to whom disappointment and sin are familiar, and who after long suffering has found God. He has taken to his heart the world, in which the good dwells beside the evil. The elder amidst the Russian folk, easing their anguish, dispelling their doubts—this is one of Dostoievsky's most beautiful pages. There is nothing supernatural about him ; he is simply one of those who are able to receive the will and soul of others into their own will and soul. He has taken into his heart so much of the suffering and errors of others, that to him man's inner world is no longer a mystery. Here psychology becomes prophecy, as it often does in those who are able to slip into another's soul and glimpse the possibilities of its development.

Visitors to the monastery regard him as a saint inspired with the spirit of God, yet this divinity is nothing but the indomitable, infinite power of love. This love is no poetry, nor theoretical conception ; it is fused with life. People adore Zosima and Dostoievsky says that the Russians must find something holy before which to kneel. For a single saint is a guarantee that the divine has not faded away from the face of the earth. The elder Zosima is not another version of Christ on earth, but only a herald ; Christ lives within him as his Eternal Master. He is *one*

witness to the eternal truth, but the day will come, as Dostoievsky firmly believes, when we shall all be witnesses to it. "But until then we must keep the flag flying. Sometimes, even if he has to do it alone, and his conduct seems to be crazy, a man must set an example, and so draw men's souls out of their solitude, and spur them to some act of brotherly love, that the great idea may not die."

To prepare for the realisation of universal brotherhood on earth, we must first of all triumph over man's isolation and self-concentration, "for all mankind in our age have split up into units . . . and each hides himself and hides what he has, from the rest, and he ends by being repelled by others and repelling them". Where lies the deepest reason for this dreadful aloofness?

"Without God man is so lonely" is the answer that we find in "A Raw Youth". This view was expressed by Dostoievsky more than fifty years ago, but no modern writer has defined our ailment more clearly.

Let us briefly outline Zosima's teaching, for it contains all the elements of Dostoievsky's religion.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not to be sought for in a life beyond, the Kingdom of Heaven is in man himself. Redemption will not be won beyond the grave; it is being won always, it is being dispensed daily. We must not expect reward for our good deeds in Heaven, the reward is the immediate consequence of the deed, the spiritual joy which we

experience after an act of unselfish love. Happiness does not come from seeking happiness itself, but from the elicitation of happiness ; only an active, outward-tending happiness is conceivable.

There is no material hell. All the horrors of hell are to be understood symbolically, and if we accept the idea that a material fire awaits the sinner beyond the grave, then this physical anguish, deadening the consciousness of the spiritual anguish, seems to us merely an alleviation. For spiritual agony is more terrible than any physical torment, and the most dreadful spiritual torment is when we are no longer capable of love. That is why to the question : "What is hell ?" Zosima answers : "The suffering of being unable to love." This is the kernel of Dostoevsky's religion. If we have no one who loves us, life becomes sad ; if our love is unreturned, we are reduced to despair ; but if we are conscious of having lost the capacity to love, if we are conscious that whatever may happen, nothing can arouse in us the experience of love, then we no longer live, God is far from us and hell is within us. For we live in so far as we love, and then only are we near God.

And therefore Zosima entreats us : "Brothers, have no fear of men's sin. Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals—love the plants, love everything. If you love every,

thing you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Kiss the earth and love it with an unceasing, consuming love. . . Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears. Don't be ashamed of that ecstasy, prize it, for it is a gift of God and a great one ; it is not given to many but only to the elect."

Man draws near to God by daily effort of untiring, active love. Zosima calls this love "inexorable", for it demands the suppression of our natural egoism and the abnegation of self. On certain occasions, for a fleeting moment, even a scoundrel may feel love, but Zosima demands a lasting love attained by stern effort : "It is dearly bought. For we must love not occasionally, for a moment, but for ever." This is the great difficulty, and without faith in God none can succeed.

Only he who can renounce his will, feels the presence of God. That is the greatest sacrifice, and Dostoievsky's individualists, however strong, cannot achieve it. The placing of our own will and our own ego in the very centre of things is the root of all sin. Kant, too, bids us "Ohne Neigung dem Gesetz gehorchen." Only Kant annihilates the inner life of the individual while Dostoievsky deepens it. "Humility is a mighty power"—the Idiot who is so near to Christ knows this, and Zosima preaches the same text. But this is not the annihilation of personality, only the deliverance from egoism and cold intellectuality.

In German mysticism the human features are lost in the divine, but the characteristic of Slavonic mysticism is that man preserves his own identity in the very presence of God.

Dostoievsky calls for not egocentric, but theocentric personality.

His religion has not been embodied in a rigid, definite system; if it had, Dostoievsky would not have been the creator of vivid works of art in which breathe living men with their faults, their imperfections and unquenchable inner splendour, but the founder of a philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, taking a broad view we may say that the religion of Dostoievsky is a religion of perpetual development and active love, with no trace of asceticism nor yet of compromise, a religion of freedom with the personality of Christ at its centre.

### *The Russian Nation*

“Humble yourself, proud man! . . . Humble yourself, eternal idler, and first of all toil upon your native fields.” This was Dostoievsky’s exhortation to every individual six months before his death, in his famous speech at the Pushkin ceremony, in which he synthesised all that he had said before. “The truth is not outside of you, but within yourself. Seek it in yourself, discover your own self, and then master yourself and rule over yourself and you will behold the truth . . . and you will become freer than you had ever dreamed possible. . . . There can be no

universal harmony if you yourself, surly and haughty, are unworthy of it and demand life gratis, not perceiving that it must be paid for." That is the duty of the individual. But the individual must not shut himself up within himself, he must not tear himself away from the nation which has fed the roots of his being ; he must work in his native country, but he must always bear in mind that humanity is greater than the nation.

In his speech Dostoievsky holds up Pushkin as the peerless example, praises him as the greatest and most truly Russian poet, since he better than all others had grasped the beauty of the *Russian* soul, but could at the same time enter into the spirit of the most different nations and let the whole world flood through him. This power of incarnation was the quality which Dostoievsky esteemed most, not only in poets but in the ordinary man and the nation. To his favourite characters he gave this capacity of stealing lovingly into the souls of other men. He considered this inner sensitiveness as the most characteristic and most beautiful quality not only of Pushkin but of the whole Russian nation. That is why the Russian nation more than any other will be able to realise the idea of universal brotherhood and the universal union of mankind, " and that is why in the end our poor country will be the one which will give humanity a new word ", said Dostoievsky at the Pushkin celebrations ; and further on he indicated that in the economic and scientific fields the Russians

have achieved far less than the nations of western Europe ; their strength lies in ethical and religious searchings in which they do not wrap themselves up, but which they spread throughout the world.

“ Yes, the duty of the Russian is indubitably bound up with all Europe, with the whole world. To be truly *Russian* means to be the brother of all, a universal man. . . . To the true Russian the destiny of all Europe, of every foreign nation, is as near to his heart as the destiny of Russia.” To unite the whole world not by sword and bloodshed, but by the power of love, making all men brothers, that, in Dostoievsky’s conception, is the mission of the Russian people.

At the close of his speech he heralds with enthusiasm the future Russian man, who will revive in western Europe the forgotten image of Christ and will banish her doubts and despairing emptiness of soul.

In this speech he synthesises the Slavophil view (the riches of culture are to be sought in the past of the Slavonic nations) with the conviction of the Westernizers (he alone is cultured who has assimilated the spirit of western Europe). This speech testifies that the path of Dostoievsky leads from the nation to mankind, from individualism to universalism.

### *Suffering*

“ It’s not that I don’t accept God . . . it’s the world created by Him I don’t and cannot accept.”

What prevented Dostoievsky from working out a

consistent philosophy and from accepting God without pangs of doubt, was the incomprehensibility of much suffering. A cosmos of Dostoievsky without suffering is inconceivable. We have already noted that he recognised the necessity of suffering for the formation of personality and we quoted Raskolnikov's words that the understanding deepens and broadens with suffering. He experienced profound reverence in the presence of suffering ; suffering renders man worthy, even holy. Raskolnikov kneels down before the suffering of Sonya, the elder Zosima bows down to the earth before Mitya, foreseeing his path of torment. A wicked beast dwells in man beside the light of God, and to overcome it, to free the way for God's light, we must go through great suffering. In prison Mitya confesses to his brother : "A new man has risen up in me. He was hidden in me, but would never have come to the surface if it hadn't been for this blow from Heaven."

It is suffering that like hammer and chisel hews out personality ; brittle material crumbles away, but that which endures stands out the more strongly. Suffering is the test of spiritual greatness, and suffering has its meaning if only we are patient and know how to seek it.

But there is another type of suffering with the meaning of which Dostoievsky struggled passionately, the meaning of which no one, neither he nor any one else, has yet discovered. It is the suffering of children. The Church replies that children must suffer for the

sins of their fathers. But this verdict is incomprehensible to the human heart. "The innocent must not suffer on account of others!" Dostoevsky protested in despair. He who has seen the cruelty of life, of parents, of disease to little helpless children, how the child cries, vainly supplicating the dear God, will never be able to understand wherefore this is necessary.

"If every one must suffer in order to redeem with suffering the eternal harmony, why should children be involved in it? Why are they mixed with the material which must dung the soil only for some future harmony?"

Dostoevsky rejected such harmony with a shudder of emotion: "No, it is not worth the tears of a single anguished child." He tells of a case in which a landlord, in the days of serfdom, let his dogs tear to pieces a little child who had struck one of his hounds with a stone. And he compelled the child's mother to be present and to look on. That is a historical fact, but we know that every day countless children suffer agony from incurable diseases and hunger, and mothers are forced to be witnesses, like that mother on the Russian estate, in the consciousness that there is no salvation. And Dostoevsky says: "If children's suffering is necessary to make up the sum of suffering required for the revelation of truth, I say beforehand, that all the truth is not worth this price . . . I do not want this harmony, out of love for mankind, I do not want it . . . this harmony is taxed too high, the

price of this entrance ticket is not suited to our pocket. . . : And therefore I hasten beforehand to surrender the ticket . . ." Dostoievsky could write thus, since he was himself a passionately devoted father who had often stood at the bedside of a sick, suffering child, feeling in poignant despair that all his love could not take away one small part of the suffering. And even if the death of a child deepened his religious feeling, even if he climbed thereafter yet a few steps nearer the light, still he found no meaning whatsoever in the suffering of children, for he could not admit the thought that one being—and still so feeble and little as to be incapable of sin—must suffer in order that another may climb nearer God!

Dostoievsky's own life was penetrated with suffering, but neither poverty, nor incurable disease, nor even sentence of death succeeded in embittering him; he found an end and a meaning in his own suffering, but his soul filled with despair when he beheld the exorbitant and meaningless suffering of children.

### *Heroic Idealism*

"We shall rise again to joy, without which man cannot live," says Mitya, but literary critics frequently remark that Dostoievsky is a destructive writer, that he oppresses and pains the reader excessively. Is this really the case? It is indisputable that in the cosmos of Dostoievsky there is much suffering, but it is indisputable, too, that in life there is far more. Every

one whose path of life has not always been smooth, knows that the name of the most pitiless author is Life. But it may be objected that it is just because life itself oppresses and tortures us that art should not do so. And it is a healthy tendency to reject destructive, annihilating art. But the novels of Dostoievsky are not such.

It is true that he depicts life with a peculiar inward nakedness. Outward life is normally very polite and decorous ; we meet, greet each other with a "How do you do" and pass on, knowing as much of a person's inner life as does the nocturnal passer-by of the shuttered houses into which he is permitted only a random glimpse through an overlooked chink in the window.

But Dostoievsky is a nocturnal passer-by for whom the walls of all the houses are transparent, and the swarming pains and lusts that men hide shame-facedly from the curious gaze of the passer-by, are revealed to his inward eye. He saw life in peculiar nakedness. That is why it is not good to give his books to adolescents ; for the young mind cannot endure nakedness. And there is another reason why it is not advisable to give his books to schoolboys : the youth, unable to embrace the whole of Dostoievsky's art, fastens upon one particular book. Having read "Crime and Punishment", he is captivated by Raskolnikov, justifies him, and sometimes misdirects his young life, not knowing that Raskolnikov is a type which we must transcend. But the grown man,

when he takes up some book of Dostoievsky, which perhaps he has read more than once already, will each time catch sight of something new, and by his new discoveries will be able to measure his own spiritual development.

Those who stop half way in their study of Dostoevsky speak of his gloom, but if we cast our eyes across the whole of Dostoevsky's light-dark cosmos, then we see that the later the period to which the work belongs, the more light there is in it. In "The House of the Dead" (1861) and in "Illegal Memories", the gloom is oppressive. But already in "The Idiot" (1868) the chief figure is bright and happy. How wonderful are his words: "Oh, what matters all my suffering and my misfortune, when I have the strength to be happy?" But the Idiot bears the mark of the world beyond; he is ill and collapses after his ecstatic hymn to life.

Kirilov is pellucidly serene. His conversation with Stavrogin is unforgettable. Kirilov asks: "Have you seen a leaf, a leaf from a tree?" "Yes," answers Stavrogin. And Kirilov muses on: "I saw a yellow one lately, a little green. It was decayed at the edges. It was blown by the wind. When I was ten years old I used to shut my eyes in the winter on purpose and fancy a green leaf, bright, with veins on it, and the sun shining. I used to open my eyes and not believe them, because it was very nice, and I used to shut them again." Stavrogin at a loss asks: "Is it an

allegory?" but Kirilov answers: "No, only a leaf." A mere leaf can enhance his pleasure in life. But Kirilov commits suicide, and so a veil falls over his serenity. In the same novel we meet Shatov, who is full of rustling spring, but he is shot and fell darkness seems to triumph. Four years before his death, Dostoievsky wrote a fantastic tale, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", in which the chief character is an idealist with an extremely sensitive conscience, a proclaimer of universal brotherhood; but he is somewhat ridiculous. Had this been Dostoievsky's last work, we might with justice have spoken of his pessimism. But in that last work, in his life's Bible, "The Brothers Karamazov", light triumphs exultantly. Not only the bright characters, Zosima and Alyosha, but even their dark counterparts, Ivan and Mitya, raise paeans of glory to life and joy. White-haired Zosima, feeling that the gates of death are now opening, looks back over a long life, full of trials, and exhorts his disciples: "Pray to God for gladness. Be glad as children, as the birds of heaven." Alyosha appropriates his teaching, takes it out into life, and practises it. As he kneels down beside Zosima's coffin, the meaning of life is revealed to him. "It was not men's grief, but their joy Christ visited, He worked His first miracle to help men's gladness. . . . He who loves men, loves their gladness, too!" When Alyosha falls asleep with weariness, Zosima appears to him in a dream and incites him: "Begin your work, dear one, begin it, gentle one!"

. . . Do you see our Sun, do you see Him? He is changing the water into wine, that the gladness of the guests may not be cut short."

Alyosha awakens and feels that henceforth he belongs to life, "his soul, overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space, openness". He went out from the monastery into the calm, starry autumn night. "The silence of the earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens. The mystery of the earth was one with the mystery of the stars. . . ." He threw himself on the earth and kissed it; a new consciousness filled his being to overflowing. He fell down on the earth a callow youth, and rose a mighty warrior. Three days later he leaves the monastery to go his way through life as a strong and cheerful man. Now he knows that life is more than the monastery, that the ascetic anchorite is but an egotist. We must not shut ourselves up in our sanctity, but radiate it into life; our sanctity must be made concrete.

An even more powerful hymn to life is raised by Mitya. He is unjustly condemned, as Dostoevsky once was. When Dostoevsky was taken to Siberia he exclaimed, still brimming with vitality, that he beheld the sun, and just for that it was worth while to live. Mitya, too, feels the joy without which man cannot live. . . . "And then we men underground will sing from the bowels of the earth a glorious hymn to God, with Whom is Joy . . . I love Him! . . . Yes, life is full, there is life even underground! I exist! In a thousand agonies I exist! I live . . .

on the rack—but I exist! Though I sit alone on a pillar—I exist! I see the sun, and if I don't see the sun, I know it's there. And there's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there."

But Ivan Karamazov's hymn leaves the deepest effect, because he feels, not only at times, but always, how painful life is. "If I didn't believe in life, if I lost faith in the woman I love, lost faith in the order of things, were convinced that everything is a disorderly, damnable and perhaps devil-ridden chaos, if I were struck by every horror of man's disillusionment—still I should want to live . . . I've asked myself many times whether there is in the world any despair that would overcome this frantic and perhaps unseemly thirst for life in me, and I've come to the conclusion that there isn't . . . I love the sticky little leaves as they open in Spring. I love the blue sky, I love some people, whom one loves you know sometimes without knowing why. I love some great deeds done by men, though I've long ceased to have faith in them, yet from old habit one's heart prizes them. . . . It's not a matter of intellect or logic, it's loving with one's inside, with one's stomach."

In "The Brothers Karamazov" good triumphs over evil. Evil is annihilated. Smerdiakov dies, old Karamazov dies. Ivan is smitten with illness to free him from the demon of intellectualism; prison and penalty cool down the volcanic sensuality of Mitya and force him to halt and look into himself. Zosima's serene understanding is transfused into Alyosha and

## HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

through him flows into all life. Alyosha is no longer ridiculous, he is no social outcast nor humiliated man, great waves of life heave within him. At the end of the novel we see Alyosha surrounded by budding life, by schoolboys. They have gathered at the great stone, at the favourite spot of Ilusha, the victim of untimely death. And Alyosha is the hero of all those little boys who listen to his words, their faces tense, their eyes moist and glittering. "Ah, children, ah, dear friends, don't be afraid of life . . . well, let us go! Let us go now, hand in hand." Dostoievsky concludes his greatest work with a spring-like call to life.

Normally idealism and closeness to life are two inversely proportional quantities: the more ideal, given us grandiose systems of idealism in which the further from real life. Spinoza and Kant have breath of the living man is frozen. But the world-view of Dostoievsky is close to life, an idealism derived from life. A few years before his death he writes in his journal: "All your unhappiness consists in this, that you are quite unaware how beautiful you are! Each of you might give gladness to all. . . . And this power is granted to everyone of you, but the misfortune is that it lies buried so deeply within you. And he adds if man once became conscious of the power that is given him to transform both himself and life, we should meet in life more serene beings than Beatrice and Juliet, grander heroes than those of Shakespeare and Schiller.

And if we ask who inspire us most, those who shun the cruel touch of life and shut their eyes to its horrors, or those whose hearts are full of the arrows of Saint Sebastian and who nevertheless raise their hands to bless life? There can be only one answer.

Heroic idealism is the basis of Dostoievsky's philosophy. It is difficult to embody in concepts for it is too fluid, too close to life, and life can never be divided by science without a remainder; there always remains something irrational.

### *Conclusion*

Dostoievsky, the ecstatic and God-seeker, is a writer endowed with piercing intellect and philosophical comprehension. In his novels he intuitively expressed many concepts at which science arrived a decade later.

His novels are manuals for the modern psychiatrists, the psychologists of the school of individual psychology regard him as their founder, and tutors of difficult or backward children find rich material in the analysis of Nyetochka Nyezvanov, Ilusha and other of his child characters. Doctors affirm that Dostoievsky's descriptions of epilepsy will find a place in the medical handbooks of the future. Lawyers are recommended to read "Crime and Punishment". Philosophers write dissertations on the ethical and religious problems in the novels of Dostoievsky. And no theologian can ignore his long struggle, revealed in the Idiot, Alyosha and Zosima, to regenerate Christianity.

Nevertheless, the greatest thing in the art of Dostoievsky is his feeling for man. There is no other writer in the whole literature of the world who loved man so passionately, who bowed down so deeply before his suffering, who knew also how much darkness there is in man and who, in spite of all,

took him to his heart and blessed him. So passionately did he love man that he forces us to do the same, and is it possible to live without this love?

Dostoievsky is the greatest searcher after the meaning of life. He searches for it so intensely that he compels every one who enters his world to find his own life's meaning before he can continue. That is why mankind will not turn to Dostoievsky in periods of peace and harmony, but only in times of cataclysms and catastrophe.

If in conclusion we seek some utterance which gives concentrated expression to the spirit of Dostoievsky, we may quote the words of Raskolnikov: "I did not bow down to you, I bowed down to all the suffering of humanity." And a second such utterance may be mentioned. "The House of the Dead" ends with the unanswered question: "Their mighty energies were vainly wasted, wasted abnormally, unjustly, hopelessly. And who was to blame, whose fault was it? That's just it, who was to blame?" And in "The Brothers Karamazov", in frequent variations, is given the answer: "Every one of us is . . . responsible for all men and everything on earth, not merely through the general sinfulness of creation, but each one personally for all mankind and every individual man."

THE END

